STAR WARS®

OMNIBUS

A LONG TIME AGO. . . .

VOLUME 1

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DARK HORSE BOOKS®

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STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS™

FABULOUS FIRST ISSUE!

ENTER: LUKE SKYWALKER! WILL HE *SAVE* THE GALAXY-- OR *DESTROY* IT?

MARVEL'S EPIC OFFICIAL ADAPTATION OF THE MONUMENTAL 20TH CENTURY FOX MOVIE!
—A FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS—

LucasFilm PRESENTS: ROY THOMAS SCRIPTER/EDITOR * HOWARD CHAYKIN ILLUSTRATOR * JIM NOVAK LETTERER * ... ADAPTING THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY OF ALL!

STAR WARS

ADAPTED FROM THE GEORGE LUCAS FILM, A 20th CENTURY-FOX RELEASE

It is a period of CIVIL WAR in the galaxy.

A brave alliance of UNDERGROUND FREEDOM FIGHTERS has challenged the tyranny and oppression of the awesome GALACTIC EMPIRE.

To CRUSH the rebellion once and for all, the EMPIRE is constructing a sinister new BATTLE STATION. Powerful enough to destroy an entire planet, its COMPLETION will spell CERTAIN DOOM for the champions of freedom.

Striking from a fortress hidden among the billion stars of the galaxy, REBEL SPACESHIPS have won their first victory in a battle with the powerful IMPERIAL STARFLEET. The Empire fears that ANOTHER defeat could bring a THOUSAND MORE solar systems into the rebellion, and IMPERIAL CONTROL over the galaxy would be LOST FOREVER.

BUT, THAT IS THE NEAR FUTURE.

AT THIS MOMENT:

ABOVE THE YELLOW PLANET TATOOINE, A GIGANTIC IMPERIAL STARSHIP PURSUES A REBEL SPACECRAFT--ITS DEADLY LASER BOLTS DISINTEGRATE THE SMALLER SHIP'S MAIN SOLAR FIN WITH A SOULSEARING SHUDDER...!

MARIE SEVERIN, COLORIST

MOMENTS LATER, GRAPPLING RAYS HAVE JOINED THE TWO VESSELS, AND SUDDENLY THE IMPERIAL TROOPS COME POURING THRU A WIDE-GAPING HOLE...

THIS IS MADNESS, ARTOO!

BEEP BEEP BEEEEP

AMID THIS CHAOS, IT IS STRANGE PERHAPS TO FOCUS NOT UPON THE HUMANS ON BOTH SIDES WHO LIVE AND VIOLENTLY DIE...

...BUT UPON A PAIR OF ROBOTS, DESIGNATED C-3PO AND R2-D2.

MORE FAMILIARLY: SEE THREEPIO AND ARTOO DETOO.

YES, ARTOO--I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT... WE SHOULD FLEE THIS WAY... DOWN THE CORRIDOR...!

IT LOOKS AS IF THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR THE CAPTAIN THIS TIME! I--

OH! I THINK SOMETHING IS MELTING!

THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO TRUST THE LOGIC OF A HALF-SIZED THERMO-CAPSULARY DEHOUSING ASSISTER...!

HEY--WAIT UP! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

WHINE

BELOW, ON THE DEATH-WHITE WASTELAND WHICH IS THE PLANET TATOOINE:

A BRIGHT SPARKLE IN THE MORNING SKY CATCHES A WATCHFUL EYE.

LUKE SKYWALKER LOWERS HIS MACROBINOCULARS, STANDING TRANSFIXED FOR A MOMENT.

THEN, HE LEAPS NIMBLY INTO THE NEARBY, RECENTLY-REPAIRED LANDSPEEDER...

...AND AIMS THE CRAFT TOWARD THE DISTANT TOWN OF ANCHORHEAD.

WHILE, ON THE WOUNDED STAR-SHIP...

LORD VADER! THE SHIP'S INFORMATION RETRIEVAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN WIPED CLEAN!

THEN THIS REBEL WILL TELL US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW!

WHERE IS THE DATA YOU INTERCEPTED?

W-WE'RE ON A DIPLOMATIC MISSION--!

LIAR! WHERE ARE THOSE INFORMATION TAPES?

THIS SHIP CARRIES THE CREST OF ALDERAAN! IS ANY OF THE ROYAL FAMILY ON BOARD?

DARTH VADER, DARK LORD OF THE SITH, TIGHTENS HIS FINGERS ON THE REBEL OFFICER'S THROAT.

BUT, HE STILL RECEIVES NO ANSWER...

...UNLESS IT BE THE AWFUL, UNQUESTIONABLE FINALITY OF A SINGLE GRUESOME SNAPPING SOUND.

THE FOOL IS DEAD!

START TEARING THIS SHIP APART, PIECE BY PIECE, UNTIL YOU HAVE THOSE TAPES!

AND FIND THE PASSENGERS OF THIS VESSEL!

I WANT THEM-- ALIVE!!

Y-YES, LORD VADER...!

THE IMPERIAL TROOPS FALL ALL OVER EACH OTHER IN THEIR HASTE TO LEAVE--AS MUCH TO ESCAPE THEIR MASTER'S PRESENCE AS TO CARRY OUT HIS ORDERS.

WHILE, NOT FAR DISTANT...

ARTOO! SO THIS IS WHERE YOU VANISHED TO!

THE UNKNOWN GIRL WHO KNEELS BY THE SMALLER ROBOT IS PROBABLY BEAUTIFUL BY HUMAN STANDARDS...

BUT, THREEPIO, BEING A ROBOT HIMSELF, TAKES SCANT NOTICE OF HER...

AND, THE NEXT MOMENT, SHE IS GONE, AS IF SHE WERE A PART OF THE THICKENING HAZE...

WELL, ARTOO? WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

WE'LL BE SENT TO THE SPICE MINES OF KESSEL, OR EVEN--

WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

REEEE REEE

MISSION? WHAT MISSION? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HEY! YOU'RE NOT PERMITTED TO GO NEAR THOSE EMERGENCY LIFEPODS!

TWANG!

DON'T YOU CALL ME A MINDLESS PHILOSO-PHER, YOU OVERWEIGHT GLOBE OF GREASE!

NEXT, AS A NEW AND CLOSER EXPLOSION SENDS DUST AND DEBRIS AND FLAMES THRU THE SUB-HALLWAY...

...THREEPIO FINDS THAT EVEN A ROBOT CAN CHANGE HIS MIND.

THEN, AS THE SAFETY DOOR SNAPS SHUT BEHIND HIM--

I'M GOING TO REGRET THIS.

--THERE IS THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF EXPLODING LATCHES--

--AND THE TINY LIFEPOD EJECTS FROM THE DISABLED STARFIGHTER!

...AS, BACK ABOARD...

THERE'S ONE OF THEM!

SET WEAPONS FOR STUN!

I'VE SET MINE TO KILL!

ZZZZ

THEN, THE YOUNG GIRL STARTS TO FLEE ONCE MORE--

--BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, NOT AT THE LIGHT-SPEED OF A PARALYSIS RAY.

OHHH

FSSS

SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

REPORT TO LORD VADER!

WHILE, ON TATOOINE (CITY: ANCHORHEAD)...

I'VE TOLD YOU KIDS TO SLOW DOWN!

SHREEE

HEY, CAMIE-- DID I HEAR A YOUNG NOISE BLAST THRU HERE?

IT WAS JUST WORMIE ON ANOTHER RAMPAGE, FIXER.

SHAPE IT UP, YOU TWO! I-- BIGGS!

WHEN DID YOU GET BACK?

JUST NOW! I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HERE --CERTAINLY DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE OUT WORKING!

HEY, WHAT HAPPENED? DIDN'T YOU GET YOUR COMMIS-SION?

WHY, UH--OF COURSE I GOT IT! SIGNED ABOARD THE RAND ECLIPTIC LAST WEEK.

FIRST MATE BIGGS DARKLIGHTER AT YOUR SERVICE!

I JUST CAME BACK TO SAY GOODBYE TO ALL YOU UNFORTUNATE LANDLOCKED SIMPLETONS.

WAIT! I ALMOST FORGOT--

THERE'S A BATTLE GOING ON-- RIGHT HERE IN OUR SYSTEM!

COME AND LOOK!

NOT AGAIN! FORGET IT, BIGGS-- HE'S ALWAYS--

NO, I MEAN IT. COME ON.

UP THERE! CAN YOU SEE--?

THAT'S NO BATTLE, HOT-SHOT. THEY'RE JUST SITTING THERE.

PROBABLY A FREIGHTER-TANKER REFUELING.

BUT, THERE WAS A LOT OF FIRING EARLIER...!

I KEEP TELLING YOU, WORMIE--THE REBEL-LION'S A LONG WAY FROM HERE; I DOUBT IF THE EMPIRE WOULD EVEN FIGHT TO KEEP THIS SYSTEM.

BELIEVE ME, LUKE--THIS PLANET IS A BIG HUNK OF NOTHING!

WHILE, OUT IN SPACE...

LORD VADER!

I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN*--ONLY *YOU* COULD BE SO *BOLD!*

WELL, THE *IMPERIAL SENATE* WILL NOT SIT *STILL* FOR THIS!

WHEN THEY HEAR YOU'VE ATTACKED A *DIPLOMATIC*--

DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH *ME*, YOUR HIGHNESS!

THIS SHIP PASSED DIRECTLY THRU A *RESTRICTED* SYSTEM.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *TALKING* ABOUT!

SEVERAL *TRANSMISSIONS* WERE BEAMED TO THIS SHIP BY *SPIES*, WHO ARE NOW UNFORTUNATELY *DEAD*.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE *DATA TAPES*.

I'M A MEMBER OF THE *IMPERIAL SENATE*, ON A *DIPLOMATIC MISSION* TO--

YOU'RE A PART OF THE *REBEL ALLIANCE*-- AND A *TRAITOR!*

TAKE HER AWAY.

SHE SHOULD BE *DESTROYED*, LORD VADER.

MY DUTY IS TO FIND THE REBELS' *HIDDEN FORTRESS*, COMMANDER.

SHE IS MY *ONLY LINK* TO DISCOVERING ITS LOCATION--AND I INTEND TO *USE* IT.

MEANWHILE, SEND A *DISTRESS SIGNAL*--CALL IT A *METEORITE STORM*--

VAPORIZE THIS SHIP; DON'T LEAVE *ANYTHING*.

THEN, INFORM HER *FATHER* AND THE *SENATE* THAT ALL ABOARD WERE *KILLED*.

I'VE BEEN INFORMED THAT A *REPAIR POD* WAS SOMEHOW JETTISONED DURING THE FIGHTING.

THE *DATA TAPES* MUST BE HIDDEN IN IT--SO SEND A DETACHMENT DOWN TO *RETRIEVE* THEM, WITHOUT ATTRACTING *ATTENTION*.

BELOW: IN THE PLACE CALLED JUNDLAND, OR "NO MAN'S LAND"-- WHERE RUGGED DESERT MESAS MEET THE FOREBODING DUNE SEA--

--THE LIFEPOD DARTH VADER SEEKS LIES HALF BURIED IN THE SAND.

WHAT A FORSAKEN PLACE THIS IS!

WE SEEM TO BE MADE TO SUFFER.

BEEP BEEP

I'VE GOT TO REST BEFORE I FALL APART; MY JOINTS ARE ALMOST FROZ--

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

PUH WEET PUH WEET

OH YOU ARE, ARE YOU?

WELL, I'M NOT GOING THAT WAY! GO ON IF YOU WANT TO--

KLIK KLIK KLIK

--AND DON'T LET ME CATCH YOU FOLLOWING ME AND BEGGING FOR HELP--

ZRAP!

SQUEE

--BECAUSE YOU WON'T GET IT! DO YOU HEAR ME, ARTOO?

ARTOO?

THINGS HAVEN'T BEEN THE *SAME* SINCE YOU LEFT TATOOINE, BIGGS.

IT'S BEEN SO... *QUIET.*

LUKE--I SHOULDN'T *TELL* YOU THIS, BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I CAN *TRUST.*

AND, IF I DON'T COME BACK--I WANT *SOMEBODY* TO KNOW--!

WHAT'RE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?

I MADE SOME *FRIENDS* AT THE ACADEMY, LUKE.

WHEN OUR *FRIGATE* GOES TO ONE OF THE *CENTRAL SYSTEMS*, WE'RE GOING TO *JUMP SHIP* AND JOIN THE *ALLIANCE.*

JOIN THE *REBELLION*? ARE YOU *KIDDING*? *HOW*?

QUIET DOWN, WILL YOU? MY FRIEND HAS A FRIEND ON *BESTINE* WHO MIGHT HELP US *MAKE CONTACT.*

YOU'RE *CRAZY!* YOU COULD WANDER AROUND *FOREVER* TRYING TO FIND THEM.

I KNOW IT'S A *LONG SHOT*, BUT--

I'M *NOT* GOING TO WAIT FOR THE EMPIRE TO DRAFT *ME* INTO SERVICE.

THIS REBELLION IS *SPREADING*, AND I WANT TO BE ON THE SIDE I *BELIEVE* IN.

AND *I'M* STUCK HERE ON *TATOOINE!*

I THOUGHT *YOU* WERE GOING TO THE *ACADEMY* NEXT TURN--GET *OFF* THIS ROCK--!

NOT *LIKELY!* MY UNCLE *NEEDS* ME HERE, FOR JUST ONE MORE *SEASON.*

I CAN'T LEAVE HIM *NOW!*

WHAT *GOOD* IS ALL YOUR UNCLE'S WORK, IF HE ENDS UP MERELY A *TENANT* SOON--SLAVING AWAY FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF THE *EMPIRE?*

WELL, I'VE GOT TO *GO*...I'M *LEAVING* IN THE MORNING.

THEN I GUESS I WON'T *SEE* YOU...

MAYBE *SOMEDAY.* I'LL KEEP A *LOOKOUT.*

TAKE *CARE* OF YOURSELF, BIGGS. YOU'LL ALWAYS BE THE *BEST FRIEND* I'VE GOT!

WHILE, IN A SOULLESS IMPERIAL CONFERENCE ROOM, SOMEWHERE IN THE GALAXY...

...I TELL YOU, DARTH VADER HAS GONE TOO FAR!

THIS SITH LORD SENT BY THE EMPEROR WILL BE OUR UNDOING.

THE REBEL ALLIANCE IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN YOU REALIZE!

DANGEROUS TO YOUR STARFLEET, COMMANDER TAGGE--NOT TO THIS BATTLE-STATION!

YOU'RE A FOOL, ADMIRAL MOTTI!

THE REBELLION WILL CONTINUE TO GAIN SUPPORT IN THE IMPERIAL SENATE, AS LONG AS--

THE IMPERIAL SENATE IS NO LONGER OF ANY CONCERN TO US, GENTLEMEN.

IT'S GRAND MOFF TARKIN--AND DARTH VADER!

I HAVE JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT THE EMPEROR HAS DISSOLVED THE COUNCIL--PERMANENTLY.

THE LAST REMNANTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC HAVE BEEN SWEPT AWAY.

THE REGIONAL GOVERNORS NOW HAVE DIRECT CONTROL OVER THEIR TERRITORIES.

IMPOSSIBLE! HOW WILL THE EMPEROR MAINTAIN CONTROL WITHOUT THE BUREAUCRACY?

FEAR WILL KEEP THE LOCAL SYSTEMS IN LINE--FEAR OF THIS BATTLE-STATION WHICH NEARS COMPLETION.

AND WHAT OF THE REBELLION, GOVERNOR TARKIN?

IF THE REBELS HAVE OBTAINED A COMPLETE TECHNICAL READ-OUT OF THIS BATTLE-STATION, IT IS POSSIBLE--HOWEVER, UNLIKELY--THAT THEY MIGHT FIND A WEAKNESS AND EXPLOIT IT.

THE TECHNICAL DATA YOU REFER TO WILL SOON BE BACK IN OUR HANDS.

ANY ATTACK MADE AGAINST THIS STATION BY THE REBELS WOULD BE A *USELESS GESTURE*, NO MATTER WHAT TECHNICAL DATA THEY'VE OBTAINED.

THIS *BATTLE STATION* IS NOW THE *ULTIMATE POWER IN THE UNIVERSE!*

DON'T BECOME *TOO* PROUD OF THIS TECHNOLOGICAL *TERROR* YOU'VE CREATED, ADMIRAL MOTTI.

THE ABILITY TO *DESTROY A PLANET* IS INSIGNIFICANT NEXT TO THE *COSMIC FORCE!*

DON'T TRY TO FRIGHTEN US WITH YOUR *SORCERER'S WAYS*, LORD VADER!

YOUR SAD DEVOTION TO THAT *ANCIENT RELIGION* HASN'T HELPED YOU CONJURE UP THOSE STOLEN *DATA TAPES--*

--OR ENABLED YOU TO FIND THE REBELS' *HIDDEN FORTRESS.*

WHY, I HAVE TO *LAUGH*--AH--≤CHOKE≤--CAN'T *BREATHE*--I--

I FIND YOUR LACK OF FAITH *DISTURBING.*

ENOUGH OF THIS! VADER--*RELEASE* HIM!

THIS BICKERING IS *POINTLESS.*

LORD VADER WILL FIND THE LOCATION OF THE REBEL FORTRESS BY THE TIME THIS STATION IS *OPERATIONAL.*

THEN, WE WILL *CRUSH* THE REBELLION WITH *ONE SWIFT STRIKE!*

AND, BACK ON TATOOINE, ABOARD THE LUMBERING SAND-CRAWLER OF THE DESERT-DWELLING JAWAS...

WILL THIS *NEVER END?*

WAKE UP, ARTOO! WAKE UP!

WE'VE *STOPPED!* WE'RE *DOOMED!*

DO YOU THINK THE JAWAS WILL *MELT US DOWN?*

WHEET WHEET

YOU'RE A *GREAT* COMFORT.

SUDDENLY, THROUGH AN OPENING HATCH, BLINDING WHITE LIGHT FILLS THE CHAMBER...

THEY WANT US TO *GO OUTSIDE.*

I WAS *RIGHT!* WE ARE *DOOMED!*

LUKE--TELL YOUR UNCLE OWEN THAT IF HE GETS A TRANSLATOR TO BE SURE IT SPEAKS "BOCCE"!

IT LOOKS LIKE WE DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE, AUNT BERU. BUT I'LL REMIND HIM.

YES, THIS R2-D2 MODEL WILL DO FINE; THAT OTHER ONE OVER THERE LOOKS READY FOR THE JUNKHEAP.

SAVE YOUR SALES PITCH! YOU--ROBOT --DO YOU KNOW ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL?

DO I KNOW PROTOCOL! WHY, IT'S MY PRIMARY FUNCTION!

I AM WELL VERSED IN THE CUSTOMS AND--

I DON'T NEED A PROTOCOL DROID! I NEED A DROID THAT KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT THE BINARY LANGUAGE OF MOISTURE VAPORATORS.

VAPORATORS! SIR, MY FIRST JOB WAS PROGRAMMING BINARY LOAD LIFTERS, A VERY SIMILAR--

DO YOU SPEAK "BOCCE"?

IT'S LIKE A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR ME, SIR. I'M AS FLUENT AS--

SHUT UP!

I'LL TAKE THIS ONE.

SHUTTING UP, SIR.

LUKE, TAKE THEM TO THE GARAGE AND CLEAN THEM UP.

BUT I WAS GOING INTO TOSHI STATION TO--

AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR CHORES!

UNCLE OWEN--THIS R2 UNIT HAS A BAD MOTIVATOR. LOOK!

SPRING!

IF I MIGHT SAY SO, SIR, THIS R2 UNIT IS IN TOP CONDITION --A REAL BARGAIN.

THEN WE'LL TAKE IT--AS A REPLACEMENT.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE JAWAS, LUKE. RUN ALONG.

BLEEP!

DON'T YOU FORGET THIS, ARTOO!

BEEPBEEPBEEP

WHY I STICK MY NECK OUT FOR YOU IS BEYOND MY CAPACITY TO--

...IT JUST ISN'T *FAIR!* BIGGS IS RIGHT--I'LL *NEVER* GET OUT OF HERE!

IS THERE ANYTHING I MIGHT DO TO HELP, SIR?

YES. YOU CAN CALL ME *LUKE!*

HMMM... LOT'S OF *CARBON SCORING* HERE. YOU'VE BOTH SEEN A LOT OF *ACTION.*

WELL, MY LITTLE FRIEND, YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING *JAMMED IN HERE* REAL GOOD...

LET'S SEE WHAT-- >OOOOF!<

...OBI-WAN *KENOBI* --HELP ME! YOU'RE MY ONLY HO--

SNAP

WHAT'S *THIS??* A THREE-DIMENSIONAL *HOLOGRAM*-- AND SHE'S *BEAUTIFUL!*

...OBI-WAN *KENOBI* ...HELP ME! YOU'RY MY ONLY HO--

BREEP!

ARTOO SAYS IT'S *NOTHING,* SIR...MERELY A *MALFUNCTION.* PAY IT NO MIND.

BUT--WHO *IS* THIS GIRL?

I... *THINK* SHE WAS A PASSENGER ON OUR *LAST* VOYAGE, SIR, BUT I DON'T--

...OBI-WAN *KENOBI...*

IS THERE ANY *MORE* TO THIS HOLOGRAM?

ouh-WHEET

ARTOO SAYS HE'S THE *PROPERTY* OF *OBI-WAN KENOBI,* AND IT IS A *PRIVATE MESSAGE* FOR HIM.

QUITE FRANKLY, SIR, I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S *TALKING* ABOUT! OUR LAST MASTER WAS CAPTAIN ANTILLIES...

I DON'T KNOW ANY *OBI-WAN,* BUT THERE'S AN *OLD BEN KENOBI* WHO LIVES OUT BEYOND THE *DUNE SEA...* SORT OF A *HERMIT.* I WONDER...

HMMM... I WONDER, IF I REMOVE THIS *RESTRAINING BOLT...*

NOW THE HOLOGRAM'S *DISAPPEARED,* GIRL AND ALL!

I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT HE APPEARS TO HAVE PICKED UP A SLIGHT *FLUTTER.*

PLAY BACK THE *ENTIRE MESSAGE,* ARTOO!

PERHAPS *LATER...!*

MAKE HER *COME* BACK!

BOO BEEP BOO BEEP

SOON AFTERWARD, AT DINNER...

UNCLE OWEN--I THINK THAT *R2 UNIT* MAY BE STOLEN GOODS.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK *THAT*, LUKE?

I STUMBLED ON A *RECORDING* WHILE I WAS CLEANING HIM...

THE *DROID* CLAIMS TO BE THE PROPERTY OF SOME-ONE CALLED... *OBI-WAN KENOBI!*

!

I THOUGHT HE MIGHT MEAN *OLD BEN*--THE NAME IS *SIMILAR*. DO YOU KNOW WHAT--?

IT'S A NAME FROM *ANOTHER TIME*, THAT CAN ONLY MEAN *TROUBLE!*

YOU *STAY AWAY* FROM THAT OLD *WIZARD*, DO YOU HEAR ME? HE'S *DANGEROUS!*

TOMORROW, YOU'LL HAVE THAT R2 UNIT'S *MEMORY* FLUSHED AND THAT'LL BE THE *END* OF IT.

I DON'T CARE *WHERE* THAT DROID CAME FROM; IT BE-LONGS TO *US* NOW!

BUT, WHAT IF THIS *OBI-WAN* COMES *LOOKING* FOR THE DROID?

HE *WON'T!* HE *DIED* AT THE SAME TIME AS YOUR *FATHER*. FORGET ABOUT IT.

DID HE *KNOW* MY FATHER?

I SAID *FORGET* IT!

ALL RIGHT-- BUT IF THESE NEW DROIDS *WORK OUT*, I'D LIKE TO TRANSMIT MY APPLICATION TO THE *ACADAMY* THIS YEAR.

YOU MEAN *NEXT TERM* --BEFORE THE *HARVEST?*

YOU'VE GOT *MORE* THAN ENOUGH *DROIDS* TO--

DROIDS CAN'T REPLACE *YOU*, LUKE! IT'S JUST FOR *ONE MORE SEASON.*

FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE'VE GOT A *FORTUNE* COMING INTO OUR HANDS. MAYBE *AFTER* NEXT SEASON...

BUT, THAT MEANS *ANOTHER YEAR...*

THE TIME WILL PASS BE-FORE YOU *KNOW* IT.

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID *LAST YEAR*-- WHEN *BIGGS* AND *TANK* LEFT.

WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?*

IT *LOOKS* LIKE I'M GOING *NOWHERE!*

I HAVE TO FINISH CLEANING THOSE *DROIDS.*

OWEN, WE CAN'T KEEP HIM HERE *FOREVER!* MOST OF HIS *FRIENDS* ARE GONE...

I'LL MAKE IT *UP* TO HIM NEXT YEAR ...I *PROMISE.*

LUKE'S JUST *NOT A FARMER*, OWEN. HE'S GOT TOO MUCH OF HIS *FATHER* IN HIM.

THAT'S... WHAT I'M *AFRAID* OF...!

THREEPIO! ARTOO! WHERE ARE YOU TWO?

THIS CONTROL BOX WILL POP YOU OUT INTO THE OPEN!

YIPE!

WHAT WERE YOU HIDING FOR? AND --WHERE'S ARTOO?

IT-- WASN'T MY FAULT, SIR! PLEASE DON'T DEACTIVATE ME!

I TOLD HIM NOT TO GO, BUT HE'S FAULTY --MALFUNCTIONING.

KEPT BABBLING ON ABOUT HIS "MISSION"!

OH NO!

MOMENTS LATER, OUTSIDE...

NO SIGN OF HIM, EVEN WITH THESE ELECTRO-BINOCULARS!

UNCLE OWEN'S GOING TO KILL ME FOR THIS.

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, SIR... BUT CAN'T WE GO AFTER HIM?

NOT AT NIGHT! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS WITH ALL THE SANDPEOPLE AROUND. BUT, COME MORNING WE'LL--

LUKE! YOU ABOUT FINISHED WITH THOSE DROIDS?

BE THERE IN A MINUTE, UNCLE OWEN!

BOY, AM I IN FOR IT, IF HE FINDS OUT!

THAT LITTLE R2 DROID IS GOING TO GET ME INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE!

HE EXCELS AT THAT, SIR.

THESE ASTROID DROIDS ARE GETTING TOO MUCH FOR ME; EVEN I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THEIR LOGIC AT TIMES.

HOURS LATER, AS DAWN SLOWLY CREEPS OVER THE SPARSE BUT SPARKLING OASIS WHICH IS OWEN LAR'S HOMESTEAD...

BERU, HAVE YOU SEEN LUKE THIS MORNING?

HE GOT TO WORK EARLY-- TOOK THE NEW DROIDS WITH HIM, I GUESS.

WELL, HE'D BETTER HAVE THOSE CONDENSING UNITS ON THE SOUTH RIDGE BY MIDDAY-- OR THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY!

MEANWHILE, SOME DISTANCE AWAY, FOUR IMPERIAL STORM-TROOPERS MILL ABOUT A FAMILIAR FORM: A HALF-BURIED LIFE-POD...!

THIS IS THE ONE! BUT, THERE ARE NO DATA TAPES HERE, SIR!

IF ONLY WE KNEW WHO WAS IN THAT POD WHEN IT--

HOLD IT!

THIS SMALL PIECE OF METAL I FOUND IN THE SAND--!

DROIDS!

...OLD BEN KENOBI LIVES OUT IN THIS DIRECTION SOMEWHERE, THREEPIO...

BUT, I DON'T SEE HOW ARTOO COULD HAVE--

AS THE TINY LANDSPEEDER GLIDES ACROSS THE DESERT FLOOR, ITS OCCUPANTS ARE UNAWARE OF A DEADLY LASER RIFLE BEING AIMED AT THEM...

WAIT! THERE'S SOMETHING DEAD AHEAD ON THE SCANNER!

LOOKS LIKE OUR DROID! HIT IT, THREEPIO!

...AND OF ANOTHER'S HAND, WHICH GRASPS THE GUN BEFORE IT CAN BE FIRED!

MOMENTS, LATER, FOLLOWING A HEATED ARGUMENT IN THEIR BARBARIC TONGUE, THE TWO SAND-PEOPLE--OR TUSKEN RAIDERS AS THEY'RE SOMETIMES CALLED--ARE SCURRYING OVER THE ROCKY TERRAIN...

...TOWARD THEIR TWO ENORMOUS BANTHAS, TETHERED NEARBY.

MOUNTING THE ELEPHANTINE CREATURES, THEY RIDE OFF DOWN THE RUGGED BLUFF --IN OMINOUS SILENCE.

WHILE, ON THE FLOOR OF A MASSIVE CANYON...

...AND JUST WHERE DID YOU THINK YOU WERE GOING?

THREEPIO?

TUH-WHEET TUH-WHEE

HE'S STILL TALKING THAT OBI-WAN KENOBI JIBBERISH, SIR--EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE HIS RIGHTFUL MASTER, NOW.

ARTOO, YOU'RE FORTUNATE HE DOESN'T BLAST YOU INTO A MILLION PIECES RIGHT HERE!

WELL, COME ON--IT'S GETTING LATE! I ONLY HOPE WE CAN GET BACK BEFORE--

NOW WHAT?

OH MY, SIR...

ARTOO SAYS THERE ARE SEVERAL CREATURES APPROACHING RAPIDLY FROM THE SOUTHEAST!

SANDPEOPLE!

--OR WORSE!

I'VE NEVER BEEN OUT THIS FAR BEFORE! THE WILD THINGS OUT HERE ARE SAID TO BE WEIRD--AND SAVAGE!

HURRY! FROM THIS RIDGE WE CAN SCAN THE WHOLE CANYON.

I JUST HOPE THAT R2 UNIT IS ON THE BLINK!

AS YOU KNOW, SIR, SUCH A THING IS NOT BEYOND THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY.

COME ON, ARTOO!

TWOOT TWOOT

NO SUCH LUCK! THERE ARE TWO BANTHAS DOWN THERE, AND--

YEP, THERE'S SANDPEOPLE, ALL RIGHT! I I SEE ONE OF THEM.

BUT, THERE MUST BE TWO OF THEM! WHERE'S THE OTH--?

SIR! LOOK OUT!

YEEOW!

SUDDENLY, A GRUESOME TUSKEN RAIDER LOOMS ABOVE THE STARTLED LAD--

--AND ONLY HIS LASER RIFLE, NOW SMASHED TO BITS, PREVENTS LUKE SKYWALKER'S SKULL FROM BEING THE SAME!

THE GADERFFII OF THE SAND-PEOPLE IS A FORMIDABLE WEAPON!

IN SECONDS, LUKE IS FORCED BACKWARD, TILL HE STAGGERS AT THE EDGE OF A DEEP CREVICE!

WHRAP

THREEPIO HAS ALREADY TOPPLED INTO IT.

AND NOW, THE SINISTER RAIDER TOWERS ABOVE THE TERRIFIED BOY--LAUGHING HIS HORRIBLE, INHUMAN LAUGH--

--HIS DREADED AXE-BLADE POISED TO KILL!

NEXT ISSUE: ON TO ALDERAAN!

STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS

LUKE SKYWALKER STRIKES BACK!

SWING THAT LIGHT-SABRE, BEN--

--OR WE'RE FINISHED!

LucasFilm PRESENTS: **STAR WARS** THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

ROY THOMAS — SCRIPTER / EDITOR
HOWARD CHAYKIN — ILLUSTRATOR
STEVE LEIALOHA — EMBELLISHER / COLORIST
TOM ORZECHOWSKI — LETTERER

BASED ON THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS ··· A 20th CENTURY-FOX RELEASE

SIX AGAINST THE GALAXY

LUKE SKYWALKER, YOUTHFUL FARMER ON THE YELLOW PLANET TATOOINE, HAS BEEN OVERCOME BY THE SINISTER SANDPEOPLE.

AT THE LAST MOMENT, NOT EVEN BOTHERING TO KILL HIM, THE DESERT-DWELLING RAIDERS TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO LUKE'S LANDSPEEDER, WHEN SUDDENLY--

WHOOOOOO

THEN, AS THE GREAT HOWLING MOAN ECHOES EERILY THRU THE CANYON, THE SANDPEOPLE ABRUPTLY HALT THEIR RANSACKING--

--TO **FLEE** IN OBVIOUS **TERROR**, AS IF BEFORE SOME HORRIBLE **MONSTER!**

BUT, TO THE LITTLE ANDROID **ARTOO DETOO**, THE APPROACHING FIGURE IS **HARDLY** MONSTROUS...

BLEEP?

...BUT ONLY A **MAN**, HIS ANCIENT LEATHERY FACE CRACKED AND WEATHERED BY **EXOTIC CLIMATES.**

DON'T **WORRY**, LITTLE DROID. HE'LL BE **ALL RIGHT!**

W-WHAT **HAPPENED?** I-- **BEN!** **BEN KENOBI**-- AM I GLAD TO SEE **YOU!**

WHAT BRINGS YOU **OUT** THIS FAR, LUKE?

THAT **DROID** OVER THERE--!

HE CLAIMS TO BE THE PROPERTY OF SOMEONE CALLED **OBI-WAN KENOBI.**

OBI-WAN...?! NOW **THAT'S** A NAME I HAVEN'T HEARD IN A **LONG** WHILE.

MOST **CURIOUS!**

I THINK **MY UNCLE** KNEW HIM; HE SAYS HE'S **DEAD.**

OH, HE'S **NOT** DEAD, NOT YET... NOT **YET.** HE'S **ME!**

BUT I HAVEN'T GONE BY THE NAME **OBI-WAN** SINCE BEFORE YOU WERE **BORN.**

THEN THIS DROID **DOES** BELONG TO YOU, AS IT **CLAIMS?**

CAN'T REMEMBER EVER **OWNING** A DROID.

BLEET BLEET

MOST **INTERESTING!** BUT, WE'D BEST GET **INSIDE,** BEFORE THE **SANDPEOPLE** RETURN IN GREATER NUMBERS.

ALL RIGHT, BUT I-- **THREEPIO!**

WHERE'S MY UNCLE'S **OTHER** DROID?

PUH-WHEEE

AIDED BY THE ELECTRONIC WHISTLES AND BEEPS OF LITTLE **ARTOO**, YOUNG LUKE SWIFTLY FINDS A VERY DENTED AND TANGLED **SEE THREEPIO** LYING HALF-BURIED IN THE SAND... **ONE ARM** BROKEN OFF...!

WHERE **AM** I? Oh, I'M **SORRY**, SIR...

I MUST HAVE TAKEN A **BAD STEP.**

QUICKLY, SON! THEY'RE ON THE MOVE!

SOON, IN BEN KENOBI'S SMALL BUT HOMEY HOVEL...

NOW, LITTLE FRIEND, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU ARE--

--AND WHERE YOU CAME FROM!

I SAW PART OF A HOLOGRAPHIC MESSAGE THAT HE--

I SEEM TO HAVE FOUND IT.

GENERAL OBI-WAN KENOBI-- I PRESENT MYSELF IN THE NAME OF MY FATHER, BAIL ANTILLIES, VICEROY OF ALDERAAN.

YEARS AGO, COMMANDER, YOU SERVED THE OLD REPUBLIC IN THE CLONE WARS; NOW, MY FATHER BEGS YOU TO AID US AGAIN IN OUR MOST DESPERATE HOUR.

INFORMATION VITAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE HAS BEEN PLACED IN THIS DROID.

PLEASE SEE THIS R2 UNIT DELIVERED SAFELY TO ALDERAAN! YOU ARE OUR LAST HOPE.

MY MISSION TO YOU HAS FAILED, AND I SHALL BE CAPTURED.

WHOEVER SHE IS-- SHE'S TERRIFIC!

SHE CALLED YOU-- COMMANDER? YOU FOUGHT IN THE CLONE WARS?

OH YES. I WAS ONCE A JEDI KNIGHT-- JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER!

JEDI KNIGHT? MY FATHER WAS JUST A NAVIGATOR ON A SPICE FREIGHTER--!

SO YOUR UNCLE TOLD YOU.

YOUR UNCLE OWEN DIDN'T AGREE WITH YOUR FATHER'S IDEALS-- THOUGHT HE SHOULD HAVE STAYED HERE ON TATOOINE, AND NOT GOTTEN INVOLVED.

HE WAS ALWAYS AFRAID YOUR FATHER'S ADVENTURES MIGHT INFLUENCE YOU.

I WISH I'D KNOWN MY FATHER.

THAT REMINDS ME: I HAVE SOMETHING HERE FOR YOU.

YOUR FATHER WANTED YOU TO HAVE THIS-- WHEN YOU WERE OLD ENOUGH.

WHAT IS IT?

TOUCH THE BRIGHTLY-COLORED BUTTON UP THERE BY THE POMMEL-- AND YOU'LL SEE!

AT THE PRESS OF A BUTTON, A METER-LONG BEAM OF BRILLIANT, INTENSE LIGHT APPEARS...

YOUR FATHER'S LIGHTSABRE-- THE FORMAL WEAPON OF A JEDI KNIGHT!

THE JEDI KNIGHTS WERE THE GUARDIANS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE IN THE OLD REPUBLIC, AND--

HOW DID MY FATHER DIE, BEN?

HE WAS BETRAYED AND MURDERED BY A YOUNG JEDI NAMED DARTH VADER--

--A BOY I WAS TRAINING -- ONE OF MY BRIGHTEST DISCIPLES, MY GREATEST FAILURE!

DARTH VADER USED THE POWER OF "THE FORCE" FOR EVIL -- TO HELP THE EMPIRE HUNT DOWN AND DESTROY THE LAST OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS.

VADER WAS SEDUCED BY THE DARK SIDE OF "THE FORCE" -- AND IT CONSUMED HIM.

"THE FORCE"?

"THE FORCE" IS AN ENERGY FIELD CREATED BY ALL LIVING THINGS; IT SURROUNDS, BINDS THE GALAXY TOGETHER.

KNOWLEDGE OF "THE FORCE" IS WHAT GAVE A JEDI KNIGHT HIS POWER.

YOU MUST LEARN THE WAYS OF "THE FORCE," LUKE--

--IF YOU'RE TO COME WITH ME TO ALDERAAN!

HUH? ALDERAAN?

FLIK!

I'M NOT GOING TO ALDERAAN! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK HOME!

I NEED YOUR HELP, LUKE; I'M AFRAID I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS SORT OF THING.

SORRY, BUT I CAN'T GET INVOLVED! I MEAN, I HATE THE EMPIRE AND ALL--

BUT, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT; IT'S ALL SUCH A LONG WAY FROM HERE!

THAT'S YOUR UNCLE TALKING.

REMEMBER, "THE FORCE" IS WITH ALL MEN, BINDING THEM TOGETHER; THE SUFFERING OF ONE IS THE SUFFERING OF ALL!

I CAN TAKE YOU AS FAR AS ANCHORHEAD. YOU CAN GET TRANSPORT FROM THERE TO WHEREVER YOU'RE GOING.

YOU MUST DO WHAT YOU FEEL, LUKE.

RIGHT NOW, I DON'T FEEL TOO GOOD!

MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE EMPIRE BATTLE-STATION KNOWN AS DEATH STAR...

DARTH VADER!

NOW, YOUR HIGHNESS...

...WE WILL DISCUSS THE LOCATION OF THE HIDDEN REBEL BASE.

AS THE CELL DOOR SLIDES ELECTRONICALLY SHUT, THE FEARFUL SCREAMS OF PRINCESS LEIA ARE SCARCELY HEARD IN THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE.

WHILE, ON TATOOINE:

LOOK, BEN--

THERE'S WHAT'S LEFT OF THE JAWA SANDCRAWLER THAT STOPPED BY UNCLE OWEN'S PLACE YESTERDAY!

ALL THE JAWAS--DEAD! LOOKS LIKE THE SANDPEOPLE DID IT, ALL RIGHT! THERE'S BANTHA TRACKS--AND PART OF THOSE GAFFI STICKS.

BUT, WE NEVER HEARD OF THEM HITTING SOMETHING THIS BIG!

THEY DIDN'T, LUKE...BUT WE WERE MEANT TO THINK SO.

LOOK AT THESE BLAST POINTS! ONLY IMPERIAL STORMTROOPERS ARE THIS PRECISE.

THESE ARE THE SAME JAWAS WHO SOLD US ARTOO AND THREEPIO.

IF THEY TRACKED THE ROBOTS TO THE JAWAS, THEY MAY HAVE LEARNED WHO THEY SOLD THEM TO.

AND THAT WILL LEAD THEM BACK--

THE TROOPERS MUST HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR ARTOO--BECAUSE OF THE PRINCESS' MESSAGE!

--HOME!

WAIT, LUKE! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS--!

BUT, THE NEXT MOMENT, BEN KENOBI IS LEFT ALONE WITH TWO SILENT DROIDS.

AND, BEFORE LONG, LUKE IS RUNNING WILDLY TOWARD THE SMOKING HOLES THAT WERE ONCE HIS HOME...

AUNT BERU! UNCLE BEN!

THEN, HE SUDDENLY SEES TWO SMOLDERING PILES WHICH HAD ONCE BEEN HUMAN BEINGS...

NO!

NO!

MEANWHILE, THE GRAND MOFF TARKIN--REGIONAL GOVERNOR OF THIS PORTION OF SPACE--HAS JOINED DARTH VADER AND OTHERS BEFORE A SCREEN WHICH ILLUMINATES THE MANY-STARRED FACE OF THE GALAXY...

ALL SYSTEMS ARE OPERATIONAL AT LAST! WHAT COURSE SHALL WE SET, LORD VADER?

OUR SENATOR-PRINCESS' RESISTANCE TO THE MIND PROBE IS CONSIDERABLE, ADMIRAL MOTTI.

THUS, IT WILL STILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE WE CAN EXTRACT ANY USEFUL INFORMATION FROM HER.

PERHAPS PRINCESS LEIA WOULD RESPOND TO AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF PERSUASION.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, GOVERNOR?

I THINK IT IS TIME WE DEMONSTRATED THE FULL POWER OF THIS BATTLE-STATION.

SET YOUR COURSE FOR... ALDERAAN!

THE BONFIRE OF DEAD JAWAS IS STILL BURNING BRIGHTLY WHEN LUKE RETURNS TO BEN AND THE ROBOTS...

I SHARE YOUR SORROW, LUKE--STILL, "THE FORCE" IS WITH YOU!

IF YOU HAD BEEN THERE, YOU WOULD NOW BE DEAD--

--AND THE DROIDS IN THE HANDS OF THE EMPIRE!

BEN--I WANT TO GO WITH YOU TO ALDERAAN!

THERE'S NOTHING HERE FOR ME NOW.

I WANT TO LEARN THE WAYS OF "THE FORCE"--TO BECOME A JEDI--

--LIKE MY FATHER!

LATER, THE SPEEDER BUMPS TO A HALT IN MOS EISLEY SPACEPORT...

WELL, HERE IT IS, LAD.

YOU WON'T FIND A MORE WRETCHED HIVE OF VILLAINY!

UH OH! HERE COME SOME IMPERIAL TROOPERS...!

YOU! HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD THESE DROIDS?

Er, uh...

DO YOU COME FROM THE SOUTH?

LET US SEE YOUR IDENTIFICATION!

YES, ALL RIGHT, I--

ABRUPTLY, BEN KENOBI INTERRUPTS IN A STRANGELY CONTROLLED VOICE...

YOU DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS IDENTIFICATION.

WE DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS IDENTIFICATION.

THESE AREN'T THE DROIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

THESE AREN'T THE DROIDS WE'RE LOOKING FOR.

HE CAN GO ON ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.

HE CAN GO ON ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW WE GOT BY THOSE TROOPERS! I THOUGHT WE WERE DEAD!

"THE FORCE" IS A STRONG INFLUENCE ON THE MIND... A POWERFUL ALLY...

...THOUGH YOU WILL DISCOVER IT CAN ALSO BE A DANGER.

DO YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN FIND A PILOT WHO'LL TAKE US TO ALDERAAN-- IN THIS CANTINA?

MOST OF THE GOOD FREIGHTER PILOTS FREQUENT HERE-- BUT WATCH YOUR STEP.

THIS PLACE CAN BE A LITTLE ROUGH.

WITHIN MOMENTS, YOUNG LUKE FINDS OUT WHAT HE MEANT...

NEGOLA DEWAGHI WOOL-DUGGER?!?

Huh--?

HE DOESN'T LIKE YOU.

I'M SORRY...

I DON'T LIKE YOU EITHER!

KATURA VESHTAT! SHADRAAK!

I'M AFRAID I STILL DON'T--

DON'T INSULT US! WE HAVE THE DEATH SENTENCE ON TWELVE SYSTEMS!

MANDYSH MAKORA!

GENTLEMEN! THIS LITTLE ONE ISN'T WORTH THE EFFORT.

COME, LET ME BUY YOU A--

NEGOLA DEWAGHI WOOL-DUGGER?!?

THLAP

UNNFF..!

THEN, AS THE BAD-TEMPERED ALIEN DRAWS A PISTOL--

--AND WHILE THE BARTENDER IS STILL YELLING "NO BLASTERS!"..

--BEN'S OWN LIGHTSABRE COMES SUDDENLY TO LIFE--

GWNG

FZZT!

--AND A WIDE-EYED LUKE SKYWALKER IS ABRUPTLY REMINDED THAT OLD BEN KENOBI WAS ONCE OBI-WAN KENOBI--

--A JEDI KNIGHT!

ONLY WHEN THE TWO AGGRESSORS LIE IN SECTIONS ON THE **FLOOR** DOES THE OLD MAN'S BODY APPEAR TO **RELAX**... OR THE SUGGESTION OF A **SIGH** ESCAPE HIM.

IN A MIXED STATE OF SHOCK AND ADMIRATION, LUKE SKY-WALKER STANDS **SPEECHLESS!**

THEN, WITH A SHUFFLING AND A MANY-TONGUED MUTTERING, THE CANTINA **RETURNS** TO ITS FORMER STATE... SAVE THAT **BEN KENOBI** IS GIVEN A RESPECTFUL AMOUNT OF SPACE AT THE BAR.

THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS LASTED ONLY A **FEW SECONDS.**

THEN, AS IF NOTHING HAS HAPPENED, BEN **SPEAKS**...

LUKE...

...THIS IS **CHEWBACCA.** HE'S A **WOOKIEE.**

LUKE HAS **HEARD** ABOUT WOOKIEES, BUT HE NEVER EXPECTED TO **SEE** ONE, LET ALONE **MEET** ONE.

GRONK

DESPITE A COMICAL, QUASI-MONKEY FACE, THE SEVEN-FOOT ANTHROPOID IS ANYTHING **BUT** GENTLE-LOOKING... NOR DOES ITS DEEP-THROATED, UNINTELLIGIBLE **RESPONSE** EASE LUKE'S MIND MUCH:

NEITHER DO BEN KENOBI'S NEXT WORDS:

HE'S FIRST MATE ON A SHIP THAT MIGHT SUIT OUR NEEDS.

THAT'S... WONDERFUL.

WHILE, OUTSIDE IN THE STREET...

WHAT COULD BE TAKING THEM SO LONG?

LOOK! HERE COMES A PATRON OUT OF THE CANTINA!

BEEP

NOW HE'S APPROACHING THOSE TWO IMPERIAL TROOPERS.

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS, ARTOO.

INSIDE, THE GIANT WOOKIEE ESCORTS BEN AND LUKE TO A SECLUDED CORNER...

YOU'RE PRETTY HANDY WITH THAT SABRE, OLD MAN.

I'M HAN SOLO, CAPTAIN OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON; CHEWIE TELLS ME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR PASSAGE TO THE ALDERAAN SYSTEM.

IF IT'S A FAST SHIP.

FAST SHIP? YOU MEAN YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE MILLENIUM, FALCON?

SHOULD I?

IT'S THE SHIP THAT MADE THE KESSEL RUN IN LESS THAN 12 PAR-SECS!

I'VE OUTRUN IMPERIAL STARSHIPS -- NOT THE LOCAL BULK-CRUISERS, MIND YOU -- THESE ARE THE BIG CORELLIAN SHIPS I'M TALKING ABOUT.

I THINK SHE'S FAST ENOUGH FOR YOU, OLD MAN.

WHAT'S THE CARGO?

JUST MYSELF, THE BOY, AND TWO DROIDS -- WITH NO QUESTIONS.

NO QUESTIONS. LOCAL TROUBLE?

LET'S JUST SAY WE'D LIKE TO AVOID ANY IMPERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS.

THESE DAYS, THAT CAN BE A REAL TRICK.

TEN THOUSAND... IN ADVANCE.

TEN THOUS--!? WE COULD ALMOST BUY OUR OWN SHIP FOR THAT!

BUT COULD YOU FLY IT, KID?

YOU BET I COULD--!

I'M NOT SUCH A BAD PILOT MYSELF! I DON'T--

EASY, LUKE.

WE HAVEN'T THAT MUCH WITH US.

BUT WE COULD PAY YOU 2000 NOW, PLUS ANOTHER 15 WHEN WE REACH ALDERAAN.

THAT'S 17,000. ALL RIGHT.

DOCKING BAY 94. WE CAN TAKE OFF AS SOON AS YOU'RE READY.

Hmmm... LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S TAKING A LOOK AT YOUR HANDICRAFT, OLD MAN...!

MOVING TO THE BAR, THE IMPERIAL TROOPERS ASK THE NERVOUS BARTENDER A FEW BRIEF QUESTIONS...

THE BARTENDER HESITATES--BUT A MAN IN HIS POSITION CAN'T AFFORD TROUBLE WITH THE EMPIRE.

HE POINTS OUT A BOOTH NEAR THE BACK OF THE ROOM.

BUT, NO ONE IS SITTING THERE BUT A SPACE-PILOT, OBVIOUSLY ONE WHO DOES NOT POSSESS A LIGHT-SABRE...

...AND A HUGE, STOIC WOOKIEE.

THE BARTENDER SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS.

I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO SELL YOUR SPEEDER, LUKE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT. I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER COME BACK TO THIS PLANET, ANYWAY!

MEANWHILE, THE IMPERIAL TROOPERS HAVE WANDERED ON -- BUT, JUST AS HAN SOLO STARTS TO SLIDE FROM HIS BOOTH...

GOING SOMEWHERE, SOLO?

MATTER OF FACT, I WAS JUST GOING TO SEE YOUR BOSS. TELL JABBA I HAVE HIS MONEY.

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID YESTERDAY. NOW IT'S TOO LATE.

BUT I'VE REALLY GOT THE MONEY THIS TIME!

THEN HAND IT OVER.

I HAVEN'T GOT IT ON ME.

YOU TELL JABBA--

JABBA WOULD RATHER HAVE YOUR SHIP, I THINK.

OVER MY DEAD BODY!

THAT'S THE IDEA, SOLO.

NOW, WILL YOU COME OUTSIDE WITH ME, OR MUST I FINISH IT H--

SORRY FOR THE MESS.

AS, IN A SLEAZY **USED-SPEEDER** LOT...

...HE SAYS THAT PRICE IS THE BEST HE CAN **DO.**

SINCE THE **XP-38** CAME OUT, THIS KIND JUST ISN'T IN **DEMAND.**

IT WILL BE **SUFFICIENT...**

I HAVE ENOUGH TO COVER THE REST. **COME,** LAD.

BEN AND LUKE DO NOT **SEE** THE DARKLY-CLAD CREATURE WHICH MOVES OUT OF THE **SHADOWS** AS THEY PASS...

...AND **WATCHES** THEM INTENTLY AS THEY DISAPPEAR DOWN STILL ANOTHER **ALLEYWAY.**

AT THAT MOMENT, AT **DOCKING BAY 94...**

COME ON OUT, **SOLO!**

I'VE BEEN **WAITING** FOR YOU, **JABBA.**

HAN, MY BOY-- THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU **DIS-APPOINT** ME.

WHY HAVEN'T YOU **PAID** ME?

AND WHY DID YOU HAVE TO FRY POOR **GREEDO** LIKE THAT-- AFTER ALL WE'VE **BEEN** THRU TOGETHER?

JABBA, THE **NEXT** TIME YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY TO ME, DON'T SEND ONE OF YOUR BLASTER-HAPPY **TWERPS.**

COME SEE ME **YOURSELF.**

HAN, HAN! IF ONLY YOU HADN'T DUMPED THAT SHIPMENT OF SPICE!

WHERE WOULD I BE IF EVERY PILOT WHO SMUGGLES FOR ME DUMPED HIS SHIPMENT AT THE FIRST SIGN OF AN IMPERIAL STARSHIP?

IT'S NOT GOOD BUSINESS.

YOU KNOW, EVEN I GET BOARDED SOMETIMES, JABBA; I HAD NO CHOICE.

BUT, I'VE GOT A CHARTER NOW, AND CAN PAY YOU BACK--PLUS A LITTLE EXTRA.

I JUST NEED SOME MORE TIME.

PUT YOUR BLASTERS AWAY, MEN!

HAN, MY BOY, I'M ONLY DOING THIS BECAUSE YOU'RE THE BEST, AND I NEED YOU.

BUT, IF YOU DISAPPOINT ME AGAIN, I'LL PUT A PRICE ON YOUR HEAD SO LARGE--

--THAT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GO NEAR A CIVILIZED SYSTEM AGAIN FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!

I'LL PAY YOU, JABBA, BUT NOT BECAUSE YOU THREATEN ME.

I'LL PAY YOU BECAUSE... IT'S MY PLEASURE.

WHILE, ON THE OMINOUS DEATH STAR...

WE'VE STARTED TO SEARCH THE MOS EISLEY SPACEPORT, LORD VADER.

IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE WE FIND THE DROIDS!

SEND IN MORE MEN IF YOU HAVE TO!

IT'S HER HOPE OF THAT DATA BEING USED AGAINST US THAT ENABLES PRINCESS LEIA TO RESIST THE MIND PROBE.

WHEN SHE KNOWS IT HAS BEEN DESTROYED, ONCE AND FOR ALL--SHE WILL BREAK!

AT THIS VERY MOMENT, BACK ON TATOOINE, YOUNG **LUKE SKYWALKER** IS VOICING HIS FIRST OPINION OF THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON**...

WHAT A PIECE OF *JUNK!*

THIS SHIP COULDN'T *POSSIBLY* GO ABOVE SUB-LIGHT SPEEDS!

SHE MAY NOT *LOOK* LIKE MUCH, BUT SHE'S GOT IT WHERE IT *COUNTS*...

I'VE ADDED SOME *SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS* MYSELF.

SHE'LL MAKE *POINT FIVE* BEYOND LIGHT SPEED, AND--

Uh oh! WE'RE A LITTLE *RUSHED*--

FIZZAP

YRAK!

SO, IF YOU FOLKS DON'T MIND *HURRYING ABOARD*--

FTIK

FTIK

--WE'LL BE *OFF!*

GET US *OUT* OF HERE!

CHEWIE!

DEFLECTOR SHIELD, QUICK!

GRUNK

ALMOST THE NEXT MOMENT, THE MOTLEY DENIZENS OF MOS EISLEY LOOK UP, AND MURMUR AMONG THEMSELVES IN A MULTITUDE OF INHUMAN LANGUAGES.

IT WOULD APPEAR THE MILLENNIUM FALCON IS OFF FOR ANOTHER RUN.

YET, ALMOST AS QUICKLY AS THEY CAN BE NOTICED ON SOLO'S RADAR-SCOPE, A TRIO OF IMPERIAL STARDESTROYERS APPEAR, AS IF FROM NOWHERE...

OUR PASSENGERS MUST BE HOTTER THAN I THOUGHT, CHEWIE!

--GIANT STARSHIPS WHICH, THOUGH STILL FAR IN THE DISTANCE, ARE FULLY 100 TIMES THE SIZE OF THE FLEEING FALCON--

--WITH A FIREPOWER WHICH DWARFS THE SMALLER SHIP'S NEARLY TO THE POINT OF THE INFINITESIMAL!

STAY SHARP!

TWO OF THEM ARE TRYING TO CUT US OFF.

KRONK

CAN'T YOU OUTRUN THEM? I THOUGHT YOU SAID THIS THING WAS FAST!

WATCH YOUR MOUTH, KID, OR YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF FLOATING HOME.

WE'LL BE SAFE ENOUGH, ONCE WE'VE MADE THE JUMP INTO HYPERSPACE.

PLUS, I KNOW A FEW MANEUVERS THAT SHOULD LOSE THEM...!

JUST THEN, THE ENTIRE SPACECRAFT SHUDDERS-- AS A BLINDING EXPLOSION FLASHES JUST OUTSIDE THE VIEWPORTS--

--AND EVEN A NEAR MISS ALMOST OVERCOMES THE PHOTOTROPHIC SHIELDING!

HERE'S WHERE IT STARTS GETTING INTERESTING!

WELL? HOW LONG BEFORE YOU CAN MAKE THE JUMP TO LIGHT SPEED?

IT'LL TAKE A FEW MINUTES FOR THE NAVI-COMPUTER TO CALCULATE THE COORDINATES.

A FEW MINUTES!? AT THE RATE THEY'RE GAINING--

TRAVELING THRU HYPER-SPACE ISN'T LIKE DUSTING CROPS, BOY!

WITHOUT THE PROPER CALCULATIONS, WE COULD PASS RIGHT THROUGH A STAR, OR BOUNCE TOO NEAR A SUPERNOVA...

... AND THAT WOULD END OUR LITTLE TRIP-- REAL QUICK!

WHAT'S THAT?

WE'RE LOSING A DEFLECTOR SHIELD!

STRAP YOUR-SELVES IN!

WE'RE READY TO MAKE THE JUMP TO LIGHT SPEED!

AT THAT INSTANT, THE SHIP **ROCKS** VIOLENTLY, AS **THREEPIO** HOLDS ONTO HIS SEAT FOR **DEAR ROBOTIC LIFE--**

--AND **ARTOO** SWAYS TO AND FRO UNDER THE THUNDERING **IMPACT** OF THE INCOMING **LASER BLASTS!**

BEEPADEEP

BEEPADEEP

WAS THIS TRIP REALLY **NECESSARY?**

I FORGOT HOW MUCH I **HATE SPACE-TRAVEL!**

NEXT ISSUE:
OUT OF
HYPERSPACE..

---AND INTO THE **DEATH STAR!**

STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS™

BATTLE ON THE DEATH STAR!

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

ROY THOMAS SCRIPTER/EDITOR • HOWARD CHAYKIN & STEVE LEIALOHA ARTISTS/ILLUSTRATORS • LEIA COLORS • ORZ LETTERS

BASED ON THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS ··· A 20th CENTURY-FOX RELEASE

DEATH STAR!

THE STORY SO FAR: A FREEDOM-LOVING REBEL ALLIANCE DARES DEFY THE FAR-FLUNG, CORRUPT GALACTIC EMPIRE -- BECAUSE THE LOCATION OF THEIR OWN SECRET BASE IS UNKNOWN TO ITS RUTHLESS FOEMEN.

BUT NOW, THE DEATH STAR -- POWERFUL ROAMING BATTLE-STATION OF THE EMPIRE -- IS POISED, READY TO DESTROY THE PLANET ALDERAAN, HOME OF THE CAPTIVE PRINCESS/SENATOR LEIA -- UNLESS SHE BETRAYS THAT LOCATION...!

NO! ALDERAAN IS A PEACEFUL WORLD, GOVERNOR TARKIN! WE HAVE NO WEAPONS! YOU CAN'T --

YOU WOULD PREFER WE SELECT ANOTHER TARGET, PRINCESS LEIA? A MILITARY TARGET?

THEN, NAME THE SYSTEM!

FOR THE LAST TIME -- WHERE IS THE REBEL BASE?

ADMIRAL MOTTI AWAITS YOUR ORDER TO DECIMATE ALDERAAN, SIR. SHALL HE--?

DANTOOINE. THEY'RE ON DANTOOINE.

THERE, YOU SEE, DARTH VADER? OUR GUEST CAN BE REASONABLE.

PROCEED WITH THE OPERATION; YOU MAY FIRE WHEN READY!

WHAT!? BUT, YOU SAID--

DANTOOINE IS FAR TOO REMOTE TO BE AN EFFECTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF THIS STATION'S POWER.

WE SHALL DEAL WITH YOUR REBEL FRIENDS SOON ENOUGH.

AND YOU CALL YOURSELVES HUMANS!

YOU ARE FAR TOO TRUSTING.

ONE INSTANT, THE LASER WEAPONS OF THE MASSIVE, APTLY-NAMED DEATH STAR ARE FOCUSED ON THE SMALL GREEN PLANET OF ALDERAAN...

THE NEXT INSTANT, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES -- IT HAS CEASED TO EXIST.

SOON, PRINCESS, THE HOPELESS REBELLION WHICH YOU AND YOUR LATE FATHER CHAMPIONED SHALL VANISH IN A SIMILAR FASHION!

AND, AT THAT SELFSAME MOMENT, DEEP IN HYPERSPACE...

=UNNHH--!=

BEN KENOBI-- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK FAINT!

I FELT--A SUDDEN GREAT EBBING IN "THE FORCE," LUKE.

"THE FORCE"? YOU MEAN, THAT THING YOU TALKED ABOUT--THE ENERGY THAT'S GIVEN OUT BY ALL LIVING THINGS?

YES. IT WAS LIKE THE CRY OF A BILLION BEINGS--STOPPING ALL AT ONCE!

IT WAS THE FEELING OF... DEATH.

WELL, YOU CAN ALL STOP WORRYING ABOUT THOSE IMPERIAL STARSHIPS THAT WERE PURSUING US; I TOLD YOU WE'D LOSE 'EM. I--

DON'T EVERY-BODY THANK ME AT ONCE!

ANYWAY, I CALCULATE OUR ARRIVAL ON ALDERAAN AT 0200.

HOW'S THE GAME COMING, THREEPIO?

OH, ARTOO IS BEATING YOUR MAN CHEWBACCA HANDILY, MASTER SOLO.

RZ UNITS EXCEL AT GAMES OF MATHEMATICAL SKILL, YOU KNOW; HE'S JUST MADE A MOVE THAT--

BEEP BEEP

GUH-RUNK! GUH-RONK!

NOW, NOW! ARTOO MADE A FAIR MOVE, AND SCREAMING ABOUT IT CAN'T HELP YOU.

LET HIM *HAVE* IT! IT'S NOT WISE TO UPSET A *WOOKIEE* LIKE CHEWBACCA!

BUT, SIR, NO ONE WORRIES ABOUT UPSETTING A *DROID!*

THAT'S BECAUSE A *DROID* DOESN'T RIP PEOPLE'S *ARMS* OUT OF THEIR SOCKETS WHEN THEY *LOSE.*

WOOKIEES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO *DO* THAT.

I SEE YOUR POINT, SIR.

I SUGGEST A NEW STRATEGY, ARTOO.

LET... THE WOOKIEE... *WIN!*

BOOP

MEANWHILE, YOUNG LUKE SKYWALKER IS OTHERWISE OCCUPIED...

YOU'D BEST CONTINUE YOUR *EXERCISES,* LAD.

YES, BEN KENOBI!

READY *LIGHT-SABRE!*

LIGHT-SABRE *READY!*

THEN HERE COMES THE *"REMOTE"!*

WATCH OUT FOR ITS *SENSORS,* LAD! THEY'LL--

YEEEOW!

I SUGGEST YOU TRY IT *AGAIN*, LUKE...

ZRAPP!

...*THIS* TIME, WEARING THIS *HELMET*.

BUT NOW I CAN'T EVEN *SEE!*

HOW CAN I *FIGHT?*

YOUR EYES CAN *DECEIVE* YOU. DON'T *TRUST* THEM!

YOU MEAN THAT IT *CONTROLS YOUR ACTIONS?*

REMEMBER, A TRUE *JEDI KNIGHT* SUCH AS YOUR FATHER AND I WERE CAN FEEL "*THE FORCE*" *FLOWING* FROM HIM.

YES--BUT IT *ALSO* OBEYS YOUR *COMMANDS*.

SWISSSH

STRETCH OUT WITH YOUR FEELINGS, LUKE-- IN THE *DARK!*

FORP!

YOU SEE? YOU CAN DO IT!

I-- I DID FEEL SOMETHING, BEN! I COULD ALMOST SEE THE "REMOTE."

HOCUS-POCUS RELIGIONS AND ANCIENT WEAPONS ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A GOOD BLASTER AT YOUR SIDE, KID.

IGNORE HIM, LUKE. HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN "THE FORCE."

MAYBE NOT, OLD MAN--

BUT I DO BELIEVE WE'RE SLOWING DOWN TO SUB-LIGHT SPEED.

NEXT STOP, ALDERAAN! WE--

WHAT THE--! WE'VE COME OUT OF HYPER-SPACE INTO A METEOR STORM-- OR SOME KIND OF ASTEROID COLLISION!

OUR POSITION'S CORRECT-- ONLY THERE'S NO ALDERAAN!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SOLO? WHERE IS IT?

THAT'S WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT, YOUNG-STER-- IT'S NOT THERE!

ALDERAAN'S BEEN BLOWN AWAY-- TOTALLY!

WAIT-- THERE GOES ONE OF THE IMPERIAL TIE FIGHTERS-- BUT WHERE'D IT COME FROM?

THERE ARE NO IMPERIAL BASES NEAR HERE!

MAYBE IT FOLLOWED US-- THRU HYPER-SPACE!?

NO, LUKE. IT'S A SHORT-RANGE FIGHTER.

BUT, IF IT IDENTIFIES US-- TELLS OTHERS WE'RE HERE--

IT WOULD BE BEST TO LET IT GO. IT'S TOO FAR OUT OF RANGE.

NOT IF I CAN HELP IT!

CHEWIE-- JAM ITS TRANSMISSION!

NOT FOR LONG!

HE'S HEADING FOR THAT *SMALL MOON*-- BUT WE'RE *GAIN-ING* ON HIM!

THAT'S NO *MOON*, MR. SOLO. IT'S A *SPACE STATION.*

YOU'RE *CRAZY!* IT'S *WAY TOO BIG* TO BE A--

HOLY--!

I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.

YOU'RE RIGHT *THERE*, THREEPIO! *FULL REVERSE*, CHEWIE!

CHREE CHREE

LOCK IN THE *AUXILIARY POWER!*

WHY ARE WE STILL MOVING *TOWARD* IT?

WE'RE CAUGHT IN A *TRACTOR BEAM!* IT'S *DRAGGING US IN!*

BUT--WOULD YOU *LOOK* AT IT, KID--?

YOU MEAN THERE'S *NOTHING* WE CAN--?

I'M *FULL POWER!* IT'S *NO USE*. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO *SHUT DOWN!*

--WOULD YOU LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT THING!?

WELL, THEY'RE STILL NOT GOING TO SUCK HAN SOLO UP LIKE SO MUCH SPACE DUST--

--NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT!

IF IT IS A FIGHT YOU CANNOT WIN, MR. SOLO...

THERE ARE MANY ALTERNA-TIVES TO FIGHTING.

AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, INSIDE THE HUGE STATION...

THE SCOUT SHIPS TO DANTOOINE HAVE FOUND THE REMAINS OF A REBEL BASE, GOVERNOR -- AND LORD VADER.

SHE LIED. SHE LIED TO US!

BUT, THEY ESTIMATE IT HAS BEEN DESERTED FOR SOME TIME.

I TOLD YOU SHE WOULD NEVER CONSCIOUSLY BETRAY THE REBELLION--

--UNLESS SHE THOUGHT SHE COULD DESTROY THIS STATION IN THE PROCESS!

TERMINATE HER-- IMMEDIATELY!

AND LOSE YOUR ONLY LINK TO THE REBEL BASE?

SHE CAN STILL BE OF VALUE TO US.

I'LL FIND THAT HIDDEN FORTRESS-- IF I HAVE TO DESTROY EVERY STAR SYSTEM IN THIS SECTOR!

NO DOUBT, GOVERNOR TARKIN...

...BUT, IN THE MEANTIME, I'VE RECEIVED A REPORT THAT WE HAVE CAPTURED THE SAME CORELLIAN FREIGHTER WHICH BLASTED ITS WAY OUT OF THE QUARANTINE ON MOS EISLEY.

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN TRYING TO RETURN THE STOLEN DATA TAPES TO THE PRINCESS.*

WE MIGHT BE OF SOME HELP THERE...!

* SEE LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

SOON, IN A SPRAWLING HANG-BAY OF THE GREAT DEATH STAR...

NO ONE ABOARD, LORD VADER!

SHIP'S LOG SAYS THE CREW ABANDONED SHIP RIGHT AFTER TAKEOFF.

NO DROIDS ON BOARD, EITHER.

KEEP CHECKING! I SENSE SOMETHING-- A PRESENCE, SUCH AS I HAVEN'T FELT SINCE--

HALTING IN MID-SENTENCE, DARTH VADER TURNS QUICKLY-- AND EXITS.

AS, INSIDE THE CAPTIVE SHIP...

THIS WON'T WORK, THOUGH-- WE'LL NEVER GET PAST THAT TRACTOR BEAM!

WHEW! NEVER THOUGHT I'D USE THESE COMPARTMENTS FOR SMUGGLING MYSELF!

YOU LEAVE THAT TO ME.

YOU'RE A DAMN FOOL!

WHO IS MORE FOOLISH-- THE FOOL, OR THE MAN WHO FOLLOWS HIM?

EVEN CRACK IMPERIAL TROOPERS--THOSE CRUEL, MURDEROUS GUARDIANS OF A FAR-FLUNG GALACTIC EMPIRE--CANNOT THOROUGHLY SEARCH A WHOLE FREIGHTER WITHOUT THE PROPER SCANNING EQUIPMENT.

BUT, WHEN A PAIR OF THE ARMORED SOLDIERS CARRY THE HUGE SENSORY APPARATUS ONTO THE CAPTURED CORELLIAN SHIP...

...THEY HAVE AN UNEXPECTED WELCOMING PARTY!

SHH! HERE THEY COME!

MOMENTS LATER, HIS VISI-SCREEN SHOWING NO GUARDS ON DUTY, A GANTRY OFFICER GETS WORRIED...

TX-421! WHY AREN'T YOU AT YOUR POST?

TX-421, DO YOU COPY?

JUST THEN, ONE TROOPER REAPPEARS.

THE MEANING OF HIS HAND SIGNAL IS CLEAR:

TAKE OVER HERE! OBVIOUSLY, WE'VE GOT ANOTHER BAD TRANSMITTER.

I'M GOING DOWN TO SEE--

--WHAT I CAN-- YYIIII!

THLAP!

NRRLK!

EVEN AS THE TOWERING CHEWBACCA FLATTENS THE STARTLED OFFICER WITH A SINGLE BLOW, ANOTHER "IMPERIAL TROOPER" APPEARS AT THE DOORWAY...

GAROOO!

WHUMP!

ZZIK!

--TO BLAST THE ONE WITHIN, BEFORE HE CAN REACH HIS OWN WEAPON!

BETWEEN HIS HOWLING AND YOU BLASTING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT, SOLO, IT'S A WONDER THE ENTIRE STATION DOESN'T KNOW WE'RE HERE!

LET 'EM COME! I DON'T LIKE ALL THIS SNEAKING AROUND.

THREEPIO-- PLUG IN THE R2 UNIT!

HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO READ THE ENTIRE IMPERIAL COMPUTER NETWORK.

PLUGGED IN, SIR.

THE TRACTOR BEAM IS COUPLED TO THE MAIN REACTOR IN SEVEN LOCATIONS...

WHOOP BOOP-K-BEEP

MOST OF THE DATA IS RESTRICTED, SIR...

BUT HE'LL TRY TO GET WHAT THERE IS TO COME THROUGH ON THE MONITOR.

WITH THE TRACTOR BEAM OFF, WE CAN ZOOM OUT OF HERE.

WE'RE WITH YOU, BEN!

NO, LUKE. I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY WAY YOU BOYS CAN HELP IN THIS.

I MUST GO ALONE.

WHATEVER YOU *SAY!* I'VE ALREADY DONE MORE THAN I *BARGAINED* FOR ON THIS TRIP!

BEN-- I WANT TO GO *WITH* YOU!

BUT, I THINK PUTTING THAT *TRACTOR BEAM* OUT OF COMMISSION IS GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN YOUR *MAGIC*, OLD MAN.

YOUR DESTINY LIES ALONG A *DIFFERENT* PATH: DELIVER THE *DROIDS* TO THE *REBEL FORCES.*

TRUST YOUR *FEELINGS*, LUKE.

"THE FORCE" IS WITH YOU!

HE'S *GONE!* I--*HEY!* WHAT'S WITH *ARTOO?*

I'M NOT *SURE*, SIR. HE KEEPS REPEATING: *"SHE'S HERE!"*

PUH-

WHEET!

PUH-

WHEET!

PUH-

WHEET!

HE MUST MEAN--THE *PRINCESS!*

AFTER ALL, *SHE'S* THE ONE WHO PUT THAT *HOLOGRAPHIC MESSAGE* INTO HIM BEFORE!*

WE'VE GOT TO *FIND* HER!

*ISSUE #1.--RT.

HOLD IT! PRINCESS? *WHAT* PRINCESS?

THE PRINCESS *LEIA*, SIR. *WE MUST GO RESCUE HER.*

I'M NOT GOING *ANY-WHERE!*

PUH-

WHEET!

PUH-

WHEET!

BUT, I'VE *SEEN* HER, SOLO! SHE'S *BEAUTIFUL!*

SO'S LIFE.

SHE'S *RICH!!*

SO'S-- *huh?* *RICH!*

YES-- AND IF WE RESCUE HER, THE *REWARD'LL* BE MORE WEALTH THAN YOU CAN *IMAGINE!*

I DON'T *KNOW!* I CAN IMAGINE QUITE A *BIT.*

YOU'LL *GET* IT!

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK, CHEWIE?

HNNH!

PUH *WHEET!*

ALL RIGHT, KID, BUT YOU'D BETTER BE *RIGHT* ABOUT THIS!

WHAT'S YOUR *PLAN?*

NOW, CHEWBACCA, I'M GOING TO PUT THESE *ELECTRIC HANDCUFFS* ON YOU, AND--

HARARGN!

I MEAN, er, *HAN* IS GOING TO PUT THEM ON YOU!

DON'T *WORRY*, CHEWIE--

I THINK I *KNOW* WHAT HE HAS IN *MIND*.

GHRK!

THREEPIO AND *ARTOO* WILL STAY HERE--

IT'S OUR *ONLY CHANCE*, SOLO, AND YOU *KNOW* IT!

--TO KEEP CHECKING THAT *MONITOR* FOR MORE *INFORMATION*.

Uh, PARDON ME, LUKE, SIR-- WHAT SHOULD ARTOO AND I DO IF WE'RE DISCOVERED?

HOPE THEY DON'T HAVE *BLASTERS*.

THAT ISN'T VERY REASSURING, SIR.

MOMENTS LATER, LUKE AND SOLO TRY TO LOOK INCONSPICUOUS IN THEIR CAPTURED ARMOR, AS THEY WAIT FOR THE VACUUM ELEVATOR TO ARRIVE.

FEW PASSERSBY GIVE THE GIANT WOOKIEE A CURIOUS GLANCE.

THEY ARE USED TO HELPLESS PRISONERS-- EVEN POWERFUL ONES.

WE'RE ENTERING THE *SECURITY AREA*, KID.

THIS *ISN'T* GOING TO *WORK*.

WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO *BEFORE?*

I THINK I *DID!*

WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH THIS-- *THING?*

PRISONER TRANSFER FROM BLOCK TX-138.

I WASN'T *NOTIFIED...*

WAIT THERE! I'LL HAVE TO CLEAR IT.

I'LL PUNCH IN, AND MAKE CERTAIN THAT BLOCK TX-138 IS UNOCCUPIED.

ONLY THREE OTHER TROOPERS IN THIS AREA, KID.

I GUESS THIS IS WHERE WE MAKE OUR MOVE.

CHECK.

LOOK OUT! IT'S LOOSE!

ARROOOO

IT'LL RIP US APART!!

NEXT MOMENT, LUKE AND HAN ARE BLASTING AWAY: THEIR REACTION EXCELLENT, THEIR ENTHUSIASM UNDENIABLE, THEIR AIM EXECRABLE.

ZIK

GNRRR

ZIK

NOT A SINGLE SHOT COMES CLOSE TO THE RAGING WOOKIEE.

INSTEAD, THEY BLAST AUTOMATIC CAMERA--

TZIP

--ENERGY-RATE CONTROLS--

ZIK

ZURK

ZZRK

HNGH

FRAP

--AND, SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, TWO OF THE TROOPERS!

WITHIN SECONDS, A **STAR SYSTEM'S WORTH** OF VALUABLE ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IS RENDERED **USELESS**...

SZZRAK

ZIK

AT THIS POINT, THE **REMAINING** TROOPER--TRAINED MORE FOR ACTION THAN RATIONAL ANALYSIS--SUDDENLY REALIZES THE TWO NEWCOMERS ARE **DANGEROUS**...

FZZP!

--AND HE **OPENS FIRE!**

BUT, IT'S **TOO** LATE--

--AS **HAN SOLO** QUICKLY DEMON-STRATES--!

KZIK

HZZZ

GNARK

SOLO! THE **OFFICER IN CHARGE**-- HE'S GOING TO PUSH THE **ALARM SYSTEM**--!

THEN **STOP** HIM, KID!

STOP HIM!

'WAY TO GO, KID!

YOU'LL MAKE A SPACE-PIRATE YET!

ZZRAP

NOW, LET'S FIND OUT WHICH CELL THIS *PRINCESS* OF YOURS IS--

HERE IT IS: *CELL 2187.*

I'LL HOLD THEM *HERE*, KID! YOU GET *MOVING!*

--CURITY CENTER! COME IN, SECURITY CENTER!

UH... EVERYTHING UNDER *CONTROL*. SLIGHT WEAPON *MALFUNCTION.*

WHAT HAPPENED?

WE'RE ALL *FINE*, THANK YOU. HOW ABOUT *YOU?*

WE'RE SENDING A SQUAD UP!

UH... *NEGATIVE!* REACTOR LEAK-- GIVE US A *FEW MINUTES* TO--

WHO *IS* THIS? WHAT'S YOUR *OPERATING*--

IT WAS A *BORING* CONVERSATION, ANYWAY.

BLAM!

WELL, *GET SET*, CHEWIE--

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE *COMPANY!*

ALREADY, YOUNG LUKE HAS REACHED THE **MIDDLE** OF THE LONG CORRIDOR BEYOND--AND COME TO THE CELL DESIGNATED **2187.**

ZZZZZ

HIS COMMANDEERED LASER PISTOL MAKES REASONABLY **FAST** WORK OF IT.

BUT, HE STOPS-- **TONGUE-TIED**-- WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS...

Y-YOU'RE-- EVEN **MORE** BEAUTIFUL-- THAN I--

AREN'T YOU A LITTLE **SHORT** FOR A **STORM-TROOPER?**

WHAT? OH--THE **UNIFORM!**

I'VE COME TO **RESCUE** YOU.

I'M LUKE SKYWALKER!

YOU'RE WHO?

I'VE COME TO **RESCUE** YOU!

BEN KENOBI IS WITH ME-- AND WE'VE GOT YOUR **DROIDS!**

BEN KENOBI?

WHERE IS HE?

OBI-WAN!!

MEANWHILE, IN THE OUTER SECURITY CHAMBER, A SERIES OF EAR-SHATTERING **EXPLOSIONS** TEAR A GAPING **HOLE** IN THE METAL WALL--A HOLE THROUGH WHICH **IMPERIAL TROOPERS** NOW BEGIN TO EMERGE...

ZIK ZIK ZIK

BACK, CHEWIE! WE'VE GOT TO **RETREAT!**

HRNK!

YOU **FOUND** HER, eh?

WELL, WE CAN'T GO BACK **THAT** WAY!

NO, WE CERTAINLY **CAN'T**

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE MANAGED TO **CUT OFF** OUR ONLY **ESCAPE ROUTE!**

Huh? BEGGING YOUR **FORGIVENESS**, YOUR HIGHNESS--BUT MAYBE YOU'D PREFER IT BACK IN YOUR **CELL?**

I'D LOVE TO **OBLIGE** YOU, BUT RIGHT NOW--

--HERE COMES TROUBLE!

ALL RIGHT, CHEWIE--STARTING BLASTING!

FTIK ZIK

IF WE **DIE** HERE--LET'S TAKE A BUNCH OF 'EM **WITH** US!

THREEPIO! THREEPIO! WE'VE BEEN **CUT OFF!** ARE THERE ANY **OTHER** WAYS OUT??

THREEPIO! WHERE ARE YOU?

BUT, LUKE SKYWALKER'S ONLY ANSWER IS THE BLAST OF THE **TROOPERS' LASERS** COMING CLOSER--**CLOSER**--!

NEXT ISSUE: **BEN KENOBI** VS. **DARTH VADER**--TO THE **DEATH!**

STAR WARS™

PIN-UP SPECIAL

CHEWIE, HAN SOLO, LUKE SKYWALKER &
PRINCESS LEIA AS SEEN BY ARTIST HOWARD CHAYKIN.

STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS

AT LAST!

THE BATTLE WITH DARTH VADER... TO THE DEATH!!

NO, LUKE!

HERE I STAND-- THOUGH I MAY DIE!

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

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BASED ON THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS * A 20th CENTURY FOX RELEASE

IN BATTLE WITH DARTH VADER

GRUNK!

ZIK

ZRAP

ZIK

ZIK

NEVER MIND THE COMPLAINTS, CHEWIE--JUST KEEP FIRING!

FZZZ

SOLO--THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW, KID!

NOW I KNOW WHY THEY CALL THIS PLACE DEATH STAR!

ZIK

OF OUR ORIGINAL CAST, THAT LEAVES ONLY THE ROBOTS SEE THREEPIO AND ARTOO DETOO UNACCOUNTED FOR--

WE'RE KIND-OF IN A HURRY THIS ISSUE, SO PAY ATTENTION:

HAN SOLO'S SHIP, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, HAS BEEN SNATCHED UP BY THE DEATH STAR, THE ALL-BUT-INVULNERABLE SPACE BATTLE-STATION OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE.

LUKE SKYWALKER HAS MANAGED TO FREE THE CAPTIVE PRINCESS LEIA--BUT NOW, DARTH VADER'S STORM-TROOPERS HAVE CORNERED LUKE, LEIA, AND SOLO-- AS WELL AS SOLO'S RIGHT-HAND MAN, CHEWBACCA THE WOOKIEE.

MEANWHILE, BEN KENOBI IS SEEKING A WAY TO DEACTIVATE THE TRACTOR BEAM WHICH HOLDS THEIR SPACESHIP HELPLESS.

So we'll take care of that little oversight right now... or else it may be too late...!

BDEEP! BDEEP! BDEEP!

I've already told them that, Artoo.

They know that all systems here have been alerted to their presence, and-- oh no!

BLAM BLAM

They're breaking down the door! We're doomed for sure this time!

Meanwhile, back in the cell corridor...

There's no way out, Han!

KRZZZ

Give me that gun!

Huh?

This is some rescue!

When you came in, didn't you have a plan for getting back out?

ZRAK

He's the brains, sweet-heart.

Hey! Stop wasting ammo shooting holes in the wall!

Just what do you think you're doing?

I've decided it's up to me to save our skins.

Get into that chute, flyboy!

GRORG!

No, Chewie-- don't rip her apart.

And I don't care what you smell.

We don't have time to worry about that--

--NNNOWWWW!

Holy--! It was a garbage chute!

This was a wonderful idea you had, princess!

UNFORTUNATELY, THESE TRASH CHAMBERS ARE *VACUUM SEALED.*

WELL, MAYBE MY *LASER PISTOL* CAN BLAST OPEN THAT *HATCHWAY,* SO WE CAN--

PKAT

STOP!

PTHUK

ZIK

PING

PTANG

PKONG

THE LASERBOLTS ARE *RICOCHETING!*

PUT THAT THING *AWAY,* BEFORE YOU GET US ALL *KILLED!*

YES, YOUR WORSHIP! BUT IT WON'T TAKE *LONG* BEFORE THE STORMTROOPERS FIGURE OUT WHERE WE *WENT,* AND--

GRUNK!

WHAT'S THAT *SOUND?*

I'M -- *NOT SURE!* BUT -- SOMETHING JUST MOVED *PAST* ME -- *UNDER* ALL THIS *GUNK!*

OOOO

GRONK

NOW HE'S BEEN *PULLED BACK* INTO THE MUCK!

NO-- *WAIT!* HE'S COMING BACK *UP!*

IT'S LET HIM GO!

YOU *OKAY,* KID?

WHAT *HAPPENED* TO IT?

I-- *DON'T KNOW!* IT JUST-- *DIS-APPEARED!*

SPUT

WH-WHAT'S THAT *SOUND?*

RRRRR

THE *WALLS!* THEY'RE *COMING CLOSER!*

I'VE GOT A *VERY BAD FEELING* ABOUT THIS.

MMM

DON'T JUST *STAND* THERE! TRY TO *BRACE* IT WITH SOMETHING!

KRUNK

NO, *I* DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO WORK *EITHER,* CHEWIE--

BUT WE'VE GOT TO *TRY!*

BLLL

PTAK

THEY'RE SNAPPING LIKE *TWIGS!*

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE *HAD* IT-- AND IN OUR STOLEN *STORMTROOPER* OUTFITS YET!

ARRAG

OUR ONLY HOPE ARE THE *DROIDS!*

SNAP!

ARTOO'S PLUGGED INTO THE DEATH STAR'S *MONITORING SYSTEM!* MAYBE HE CAN--

THREEPIO! COME IN, THREEPIO--!

BUT, EVEN AS LUKE'S MUTED VOICE IS HEARD, COMING OVER THE ROBOT'S HAND COMLINK IN THE COMMAND OFFICE --

--OME IN, THREEPIO!

--THE IMPERIAL STORMTROOPERS SUCCEED IN BREAKING THROUGH THE DOOR!

WHAT? NOBODY HERE!?

HELP! HELP! LET US OUT!

EH? THAT SUPPLY CABINET--!

BLAST! IT'S JUST A PAIR OF DROIDS!

WHO LOCKED YOU IN THERE?

THEY'RE MAD-MEN, SIR--THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE PRISON LEVEL.

THEY JUST LEFT!

IF YOU HURRY, YOU MIGHT CATCH THEM.

GOOD!

ALL THIS EXCITEMENT HAS OVERRUN THE CIRCUITS ON MY R2-D2 COUNTERPART HERE.

IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO TAKE HIM DOWN TO MAINTENANCE.

BREEP BREEP

PERMISSION GRANTED.

ALL RIGHT, MEN--LET'S GET THOSE REBELS!

BUT, DOWN BELOW, THE RELENTLESS WALLS CLOSING IN ON LUKE SKYWALKER AND COMPANY MAY NEED NO HELP...

GRRK!

ONE SURE THING! WE'RE ALL... GOING TO BE... MUCH THINNER! =Unnh!=

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THREEPIO?

WHY ISN'T HE SENDING US ESCAPE INSTRUCTIONS?

RMMMBLL

TRY TO BLAST THE DOOR AGAIN!

IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE!

SZRAP!

THEN WE'RE SUNK, PRINCESS -- 'CAUSE IT'S NO GO!

MEANWHILE, IN THE MAIN FOREWARD BAY OF THE DEATH STAR...

THAT'S IT, ARTOO! PLUG YOURSELF INTO THAT WALL SOCKET SO I CAN TALK WITH OUR MASTER AGAIN, AND --

BEEP BREEP

Oh NO! IS THAT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM? THAT'S TERRIBLE!

THREEPIO! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE WHERE ARE YOU??

ARE YOU THERE, SIR? WE'VE HAD SOME PROBLEMS...

THREEPIO, SHUT UP -- AND SHUT DOWN ALL THE GARBAGE MASHERS ON THE DETONATION LEVEL! DO YOU COPY?

Oh, MOST CERTAINLY, SIR! SHUT THEM ALL DOWN, ARTOO!

BDEEK

I ONLY HOPE WE'RE IN TIME!

ARTOO! THREEPIO! WE'RE ALL RIGHT!

DO YOU READ ME? YOU DID FINE!

NOW TO SCRAPE THE MUCK OFF THIS HATCH NUMBER, AND SEE JUST WHICH --

36611789

THREEPIO! HAVE ARTOO OPEN THE PRESSURE MAINTENANCE HATCH ON UNIT 366117891!

YES, MASTER. SO GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, SIR.

WHILE, NEARBY, BEN KENOBI HIDES AMID THE EQUIPMENT THAT POWERS THE GREAT TRACTOR BEAM...

...WHICH IN TURN HOLDS HAN SOLO'S SHIP IN THRALL!

BEN KENOBI: ONCE HE WAS OBI-WAN, OF THE FAMED JEDI KNIGHTS...

NOW HE, LIKE THE OTHERS, IS A FUGITIVE ON BOARD THIS SPRAWLING BATTLE-STATION...

AND, EVEN AS HE MAKES CERTAIN ADJUSTMENTS IN A COMPUTER TERMINAL, AND SEVERAL LIGHTS CHANGE FROM RED TO BLUE...

...THE NET DRAWS TIGHTER!

SECURE THIS ENTRY AREA UNTIL THE ALERT IS CANCELLED!

AS FOR THE FOURSOME OF LUKE SKYWALKER, PRINCESS LEIA, HAN SOLO, AND A WOOKIEE NAMED CHEWBACCA... THEY STUMBLE FORTH FROM THE GARBAGE HATCH INTO AN UNUSED, DUSTY HALLWAY...

DOESN'T THAT THING EVER GIVE UP?

WAIT! SOMEBODY MIGHT HEAR--!

ZAP!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU CAME FROM, BUT FROM NOW ON YOU'LL DO AS I TELL YOU!

AND YOU TELL THAT BIG HAIRY WALKING CARPET OF YOURS TO GET OUT OF MY WAY!

RRNK?

LISTEN, YOUR HOLINESS... LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT:

I TAKE ORDERS FROM ONE PERSON--ME!

THEN IT'S A WONDER YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!

NO REWARD IS WORTH THIS!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE TRACTOR BEAM POWER-GENERATOR TRENCH...

ANY SIGN OF ANY OF THEM YET?

NONE!...

...MAYBE DOWN HERE!

NEXT MOMENT, HE SLIPS INTO A MAIN PASSAGEWAY.

AS, ELSEWHERE...

SEE THREEPIO... DO YOU COPY?

I READ YOU, SIR.

ARE YOU SAFE?

FOR THE MOMENT, WE'RE IN THE MAIN HANGAR, ACROSS FROM THE SHIP.

WE'RE RIGHT ABOVE YOU, THEN.

STAND BY!

Y'KNOW, KID-- GETTING BACK TO THE FALCON'S GOING TO BE LIKE FLYING THRU THE FIVE FIRE RINGS OF FORNAX!

YOU CAME IN THAT THING DOWN THERE?

YES.

YOU'RE BRAVER THAN I THOUGHT!

IF YOU'D PREFER TO STAY HERE, PRINCESS, I'M SURE IT CAN BE--

Uh oh!

THE BOYS IN WHITE ARE BACK!

STOP-- OR WE'LL FIRE!

GET TO THE SHIP-- FAST!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO--?
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?
THEY'RE NOT USED TO SOMEONE WHO PUTS UP A FIGHT!
ZRAP!
THEY'RE TURNING TAIL-- AND I'M GOING AFTER THEM!
THE REST OF YOU-- GET TO THE SHIP!!
MAYBE I WAS TOO HARD ON HIM; HE CERTAINLY HAS COURAGE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT GOOD IT WILL DO US IF HE GETS HIMSELF KILLED!
YAHOO! KEEP RUNNING, YOU ARMORED CLOWNS! I'LL--
Oh NO! THEY'VE RUN INTO A DEAD END!
NOW THEY'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN AND FIGHT!
THIS WASN'T EXACTLY THE SMARTEST THING I EVER--
CRONK!
CHEWIE! GOOD OLD CHEWIE! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME, BIG FELLA--
--TO TURN AROUND AND START RUNNING LIKE CRAZY!
ZZZ
HRONK!

MEANWHILE, CHASED BY STILL **OTHER** IMPERIAL TROOPERS, LUKE AND LEIA RUSH DOWN A NARROW **SUB-HALLWAY...**

LOOK, PRINCESS! WE'RE REACHING THE **END**-- AND THERE'S AN **OPEN HATCHWAY!**

WHEN WE GET THRU IT, WE SHOULD BE **HOME FREE**--

-- UNLESS WE MADE A **WRONG TURN!**

Ohh--!

THE DEEP **SHAFT** JUST BEYOND THE NARROW BRIDGE SEEMS TO GO DOWN, **DOWN** ALMOST TO **INFINITY...!**

I'VE SHUT THE **SHIELDED DOOR**-- BUT IT WON'T HOLD THEM **LONG!**

WE'VE GOT TO GET **ACROSS** THIS THING, TO THE **OTHER SIDE...**

... AND IT LOOKS LIKE THIS **CABLE** IS OUR **ONLY CHANCE!**

HEY! IT **CAUGHT** ON THOSE PIPES!

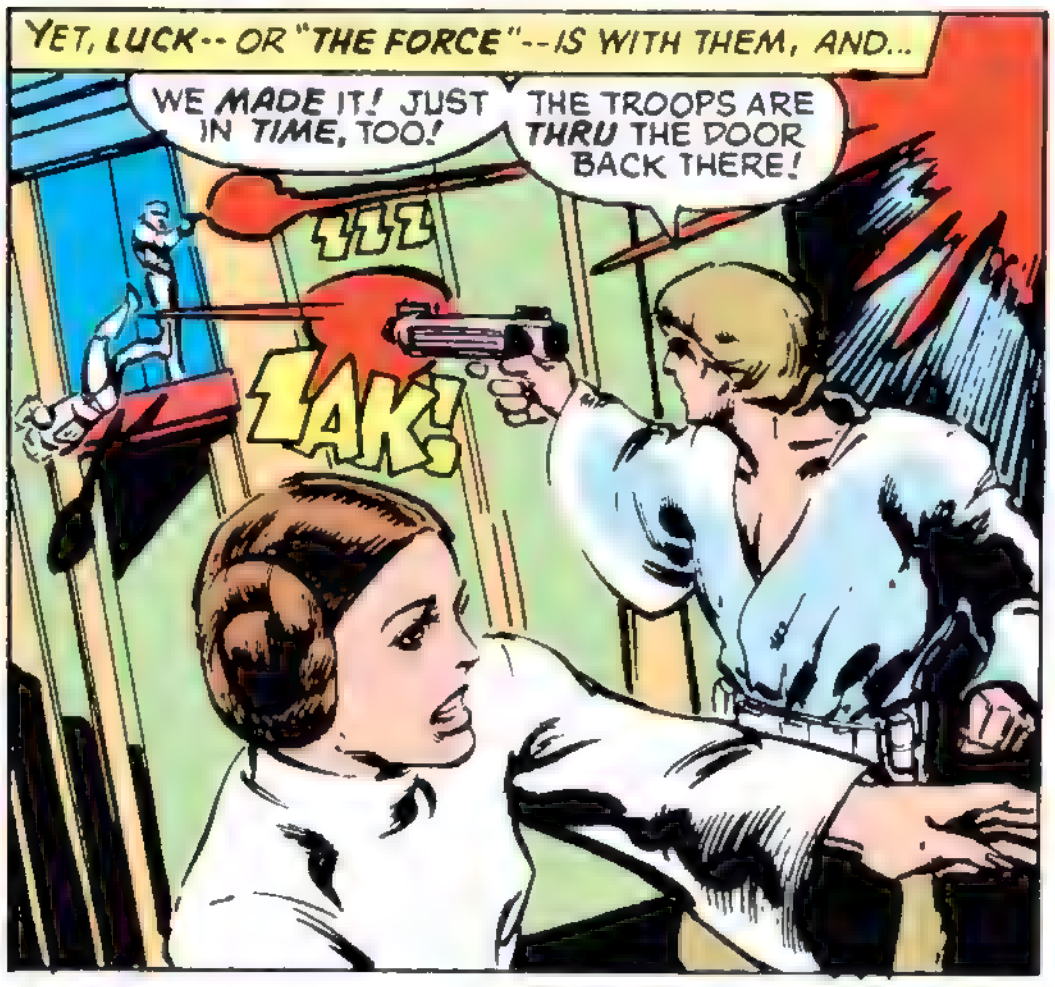
ALL RIGHT, PRINCESS-- GRAB **HOLD** OF ME, AND I'LL--

WHA--?

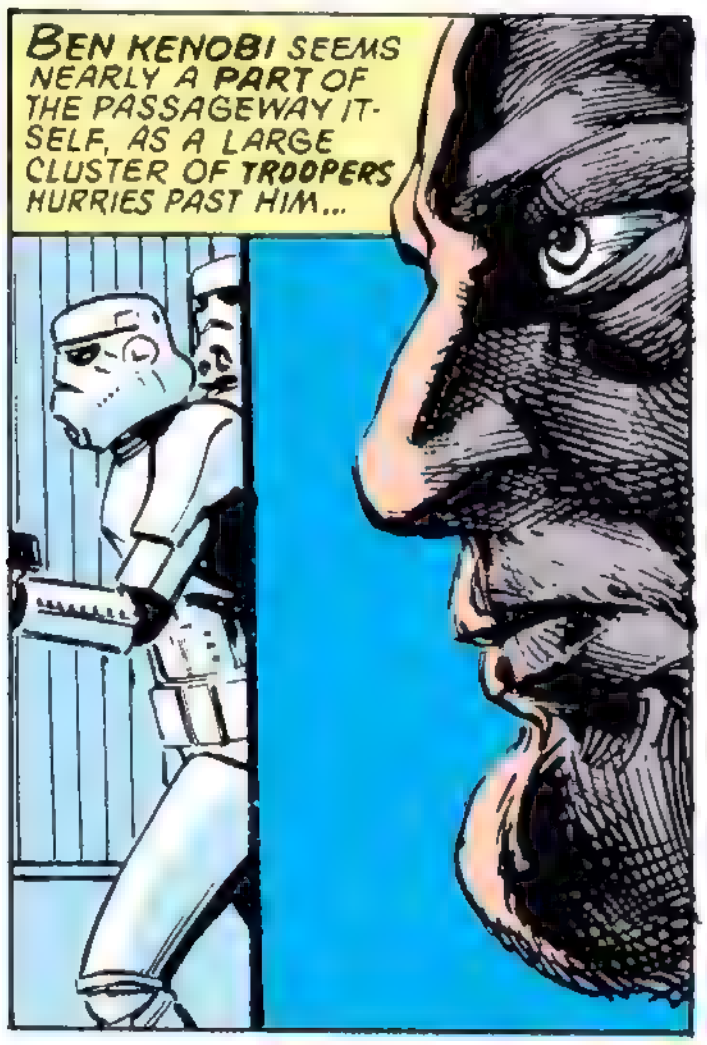
JUST FOR **LUCK!**

WE'RE GOING TO **NEED** IT!

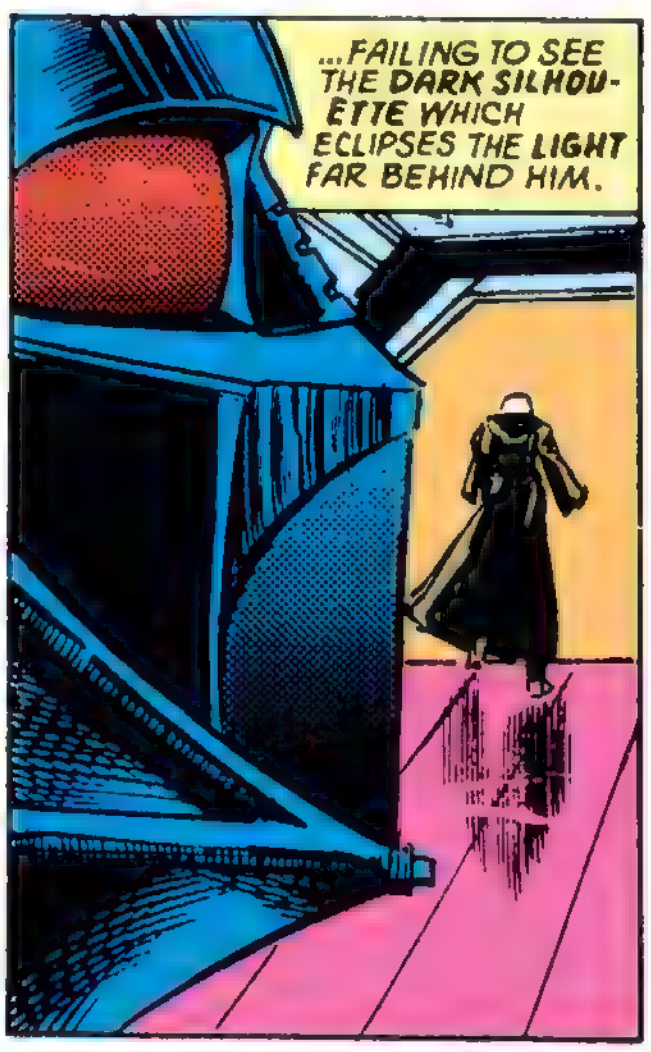
YOU'RE TELLING ME!?
EVEN AS THEY SWING ACROSS, LUKE KNOWS THAT EVEN A SLIGHT MISCALCULATION IN ARC, AND THEY WILL MISS THE OPPOSITE OPEN HATCH-- SLAMMING INTO THE METAL AROUND IT!


YET, LUCK-- OR "THE FORCE"--IS WITH THEM, AND...
WE MADE IT! JUST IN TIME, TOO!
THE TROOPS ARE THRU THE DOOR BACK THERE!
ZAK!

FRAZK!
WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE OTHERS!
LET'S GET MOVING, PRINCESS!


BEN KENOBI SEEMS NEARLY A PART OF THE PASSAGEWAY ITSELF, AS A LARGE CLUSTER OF TROOPERS HURRIES PAST HIM...

THEN, PAUSING TO MAKE CERTAIN THEY'VE ALL PASSED, HE STARTS DOWN IT HIMSELF...


...FAILING TO SEE THE DARK SILHOUETTE WHICH ECLIPSES THE LIGHT FAR BEHIND HIM.

AS FOR SOLO AND CHEWBACCA:

AHEAD OF THEM, AS THEY'VE RUN, A SERIES OF **SHIELDED DOORS** HAS BEGUN TO **CLOSE** IN FRONT OF THEM.

PANTING WITH EXERTION, MAN AND WOOKIEE MANAGE TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY **FINISH** CLOSING...

... BEHIND THEM!

GNORK

THAT OUGHT TO HOLD 'EM FOR A WHILE!

NOW, LET'S GO FIND THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON!*

SLAMM

AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, BEN HAS ALREADY **FOUND** HAN SOLO'S ANTIQUE BUT STURDY STARSHIP.

WITH EAGER TREAD, HE HURRIES **TOWARD** IT, SURE HE HAS **FREED** IT FROM THE POWERFUL **TRACTOR BEAM** THAT HELD IT...

AND THEN --

YOU!

I HAVE BEEN *WAITING*, OBI-WAN KENOBI; THE *CIRCLE* IS NOW COMPLETED.

WHEN I LEFT YOU, I WAS BUT A *LEARNER*; NOW, I AM THE *MASTER*.

YOU *STILL* HAVE MUCH TO LEARN.

FZIPP!

HIS LIGHTSABRE ACTIVATED, BEN KENOBI MOVES WITH ELEGANT EASE INTO A CLASSICAL **OFFENSIVE POSITION...**

...AS THE FEARSOME **DARK KNIGHT**, WEAPON IN HAND, TAKES A **DEFENSIVE** STANCE.

FOR A MOMENT, THE TWO GALACTIC WARRIORS STAND PERFECTLY **STILL**, SIZING EACH OTHER UP...

THEN--

YOUR POWERS ARE **WEAK**, OLD MAN!

YOU SHOULD **NEVER** HAVE COME BACK!

SZRAK

YOU... ONLY KNOW... **HALF** "THE FORCE"... VADER...!

YOU PERCEIVE ITS **FULL POWER**... AS LITTLE AS A **SPOON**... PERCEIVES THE TASTE OF **FOOD!**

FZT

YET, EVEN AS THEY FIGHT, BEN SEEMS TO BE UNDER INCREASING **PRESSURE** AND **STRAIN**--AS IF AN **INVISIBLE WEIGHT** WERE BEING PLACED UPON HIM..

HE MAKES A **SUDDEN LUNGE** AT HIS FOE--

--BUT IS **CHECKED** BY A **LIGHTNING MOVEMENT** OF THE TOWERING ARMORED GIANT!

THEN, HIS SWORD LOCKED WITH VADER'S, BEN BEGINS BACKING INTO THE MASSIVE **STARSHIP HANGAR.**

THEIR LIGHT-SABERS **LOCKED** IN MID-AIR, THE TWO POWERFUL WARRIORS STAND **MOTIONLESS...**

...LIKE **TITANS** OUT OF SOME **LOST TIME!**

AND, EVEN AS THE FORMER **JEDI KNIGHT** AND **LORD OF THE SITH** JOIN TOGETHER IN THIS GRIM TABLEAU--

IT'S **GOOD** WE'RE ALL **TOGETHER** AGAIN... BUT, THERE ARE SO MANY **STORMTROOPERS** MILLING ABOUT THE **ENTRY RAMP** OF MR. SOLO'S **STARSHIP...!**

LUKE! PRINCESS! WHAT KEPT YOU?

WE RAN INTO SOME **OLD FRIENDS.**

IS THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** ALL RIGHT?

IT'LL GET US **OUT** OF HERE OKAY--IF WE CAN GET **NEAR** IT, BUT I--

Oh-- WAIT--

LOOK!

THEN, BEFORE THE **STARTLED EYES** OF HUMANS, DROIDS, AND WOOKIEE--

--**BEN** AND **VADER** EMERGE FROM THE HALLWAYS ON THE **FAR SIDE** OF THE DOCKING BAY--

--STILL LOCKED IN THEIR DEADLY **LIGHTSABRE DUEL!**

PREPARE TO MEET **"THE FORCE,"** OBI-WAN.

THIS IS A FIGHT YOU **CANNOT WIN,** DARTH--FOR, I HAVE **GROWN** MUCH SINCE OUR **PARTING...**

IF **MY** BLADE FINDS ITS MARK, YOU WILL **CEASE TO EXIST.**

BUT, IF YOU CUT **ME** DOWN-- I WILL ONLY BECOME MORE **POWERFUL...!**

AS HE SPEAKS, BEN KENOBI SEES **TROOPERS** CHARGING TOWARD HIM... AND REALIZES HE IS **TRAPPED!**

STILL, HIS TONE IS **DEFIANT...**

HEED MY WORDS!

NOT **THIS** TIME!

I AM THE MASTER NOW!

I--

--DARTH VADER!

ZZRAKK

THE SITH LORD BRINGS HIS SWORD DOWN, SEEMINGLY CUTTING HIS ELDER FOE IN HALF!

BEN KENOBI'S CLOAK FALLS TO THE FLOOR IN TWO PARTS--

--BUT BEN IS NOT IN IT!

AND VADER, PUZZLED AT THE OLD MAN'S DISAPPEARANCE, POKES AT THE EMPTY CLOAK.

NEITHER HE NOR THE DISTRACTED TROOPERS HAVE SEEN FIVE FORMS RACING TOWARD THE CAPTURED STARSHIP...

...TILL LUKE SKYWALKER REALIZES THAT HE MAY HAVE JUST SEEN BEN KENOBI'S DEATH!

BEN!

HE WAS A BRAVE OLD GEEZER, I'LL SAY THAT FOR HIM!

COME ON, SO HIS SACRIFICE WON'T HAVE BEEN IN VAIN!

HURRY, LUKE...!

NO...

LUKE! THAT WON'T--

YOU KILLED HIM, YOU DIRTY--

FRAP!

LIKE VENGEFUL WHITE ROBOTS--THE MEN WITHIN SUBMERGED IN THE CAUSE OF GALACTIC POWER--THE STORMTROOPERS SURGE FORWARD--

ZIK

BZARK

--AND, THOUGH LUKE SKYWALKER FIRES WITH A SURE AIM HE WOULD SCARCELY HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE A FEW DAYS BEFORE, THERE ARE MORE OF THEM THAN HE CAN HOPE TO SLAY--!

IT'S TOO LATE, LUKE! COME ABOARD!

WE'VE GOT TO GO, BEFORE THEY--

NO!

THEN, SUDDENLY, A FAMILIAR YET DIFFERENT VOICE RINGS INTO HIS EARS:

LUKE--!

IT IS BEN KENOBI'S VOICE!

STUNNED, LUKE WHIRLS TOWARD THE SOURCE OF THE VOICE--BUT SEES ONLY PRINCESS LEIA--!

COME ON!

DID HE IMAGINE THE OLD MAN'S EERILY ALTERED VOICE, OR--?

THERE IS NO WAY TO KNOW... FOR THE MOMENT.

FRAK!

SO HE TURNS--AND RACES UP THE RAMP--

--INTO THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!

I... I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S...GONE!

BOOP

THEN, EVEN AS HE SLUMPS INTO A SEAT, **HAN SOLO** PULLS BACK ON THE CONTROLS--

--AND THE SHIP BEGINS TO **MOVE!**

I HOPE THAT **OLD MAN** MANAGED TO KNOCK OUT THAT **TRACTOR BEAM**--

--OR THIS IS GOING TO BE A **VERY SHORT RIDE!**

THE DULL THUD OF **LASER BOLTS** CAN BE HEARD BOUNCING OFF THE SHIP'S **HULL**, AS THE GIANT **CHEWBACCA** ADJUSTS FOR **TAKEOFF...!**

...HEARD BY **ALL**, THAT IS, SAVE **LUKE SKYWALKER!**

HE **CAN'T** BE GONE!

HE JUST... **CAN'T!**

THERE WASN'T ANYTHING **YOU** COULD HAVE DONE, LUKE...!

HOLD ON TIGHT, KIDDIES--

--'CAUSE HERE WE GO!

THE NEXT MOMENT, THE PIRATE STARSHIP **POWERS AWAY** FROM THE MASSIVE **DEATH STAR**--

--AND **DISAPPEARS** INTO THE **VASTNESS** OF SPACE!

NEXT ISSUE: **ESCAPE** TO THE MOONS OF **YAVIN!**

STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS

LUKE SKYWALKER STRIKES AGAIN!

HURRY, CHEWBACCA! WE'RE BEING ATTACKED BY THE DEATH STAR!

IT'S TOO LATE, KID!

WE'RE FINISHED!

HOBERG

COCKRUM

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

BASED ON THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS ··· A 20th-CENTURY FOX RELEASE

LO, THE MOONS OF YAVIN!

THE STORY SO FAR:

LUKE SKYWALKER, HAN SOLO, AND CHEWBACCA HAVE RESCUED THE PRINCESS LEIA FROM HER IMPRISONMENT ON THE GALACTIC EMPIRE'S POWERFUL BATTLE-STATION, THE DEATH STAR.

NOW, AS SOLO'S SHIP, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, MAKES ITS BREAK FOR FREEDOM, THE QUESTION IS WHETHER SHE CAN STAY RESCUED--!

COME WITH ME, KID!

WE AREN'T OUT OF THIS YET!

BEEP!

ROY THOMAS + HOWARD CHAYKIN & STEVE LEIALOHA
WRITER/EDITOR · ILLUSTRATORS

GLYNIS WEIN colorist | TOM ORZECHOWSKI letterer

ARCHIE GOODWIN, CONSULTING EDITOR

ALMOST INSTANTLY, LUKE FINDS HIMSELF SETTING INTO THE **LASER CANNON** ON ONE SIDE OF THE FLEEING STARSHIP..

NEVER FIRED **THIS** KIND OF GUN BEFORE!

BUT, I'VE GOT TO DO IT! **I'VE GOT TO!**

FOR BEN KENOBI!

...WHILE, ON THE **OTHER** SIDE, **HAN SOLO'S** THOUGHTS ARE OF MORE **MUNDANE** MATTERS AS HE TAKES HIS **OWN** STATION:

THAT OLD MAN, **KENOBI,** DIED FREEING US FROM THE DEATH STAR'S **BEAM** THAT HELD US.

AND THIS IS **ONE** ERSTWHILE SPACE-SMUGGLER THAT'S GOING TO SEE HE DIDN'T DIE IN **VAIN!**

SIT **TIGHT,** KID, TILL DARTH VADER'S STOOGES **ATTACK** US!

AS FOR OUR MYSTERIOUS SPACE PRINCESS, **LEIA ORGANA:**

IT'S **HOPELESS!** WE'RE OUT-NUMBERED-- **OUTGUNNED--**

BUT SOMEHOW, THESE CHARACTERS WHO'RE TRYING TO **RESCUE** ME MIGHT JUST MANAGE TO **PULL IT OFF!**

AND **CHEWBACCA,** THE SEVEN-FOOT, FUR-COVERED **WOOKIEE?**

HIS THOUGHTS ARE AS MUCH HIS OWN AS THE STRANGE **LANGUAGE** HE SPEAKS.

THEN, SUDDENLY, **LEIA'S VOICE** RESOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON--**

HERE COME THE **TIE FIGHTERS!**

WITHIN THE SHORT-RANGE STARSHIPS OF THE EMPIRE, AIR-GIVING HELMETS HIDE ALL **LIFE,** ALL **EMOTION...**

LUKE, HOWEVER, IS LESS **RELUCTANT** TO SHOW HIS FEELINGS...

MISSED!

BLAST! I'VE GOT TO GET THE HANG OF IT **FAST--** USE "**THE FORCE**" THAT BEN SHOWED ME **HOW** TO USE --

--OR WE'RE **FINISHED!**

"THE FORCE": THE NAME BEN KENOBI GAVE THE ENERGY FIELD CREATED BY ALL LIVING THINGS-- AND WHICH BINDS THEM TOGETHER.

EARLIER, IT ENABLED LUKE TO WIELD A LIGHTSABRE SKILLFULLY, BY GETTING IN TOUCH WITH HIMSELF-- AND THUS ALL MANKIND.

BUT NOW, AS THE ELUSIVE IMPERIAL SHIPS WEAVE A DEADLY TRAIL ALL AROUND THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...

SOLO! I--CAN'T SEEM TO GET THE RANGE.

KEEP TRYING, KID! HERE THEY COME AGAIN!

YEAH--BUT THEY'RE COMING IN TOO FAST!

AT THAT MOMENT, TWO FIGHTERS DIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY AT THE TWISTING, SPIRALING FREIGHTER, TRYING TO LINE UP THEIR WEAPONS ON IT.

TWIN ENERGY-BOLTS STREAK THROUGH THE BLACK VOID, ZEROING IN FLAWLESSLY ON THE FLEEING SHIP...

... AND THIS TIME, A BOLT PIERCES THE OVERLOADED RAY-DEFLECTORS, TO STRIKE THE SIDE OF THE SHIP!

REEEEEEE

THOUGH STILL PARTIALLY DEFLECTED, IT STILL CARRIES ENOUGH POWER TO BLOW OUT A LARGE CONTROL PANEL.

GAUGES WHINE IN PROTEST AT THE QUANTITY OF LETHAL ENERGY THEY ARE BEING ASKED TO MONITOR AND COMPENSATE FOR...

HROWK

...AND CHEWBACCA'S ANSWERING GRUNTS TO LEIA ARE NOT MUCH HAPPIER.

JUST THEN, ONE OF THE TIE FIGHTERS FLOATS DIRECTLY INTO LUKE'S SIGHTS.

HIS MOUTH MOVING SLIGHTLY, THE YOUTH FIRES AT IT.

NEXT INSTANT, THE INCREDIBLY AGILE LITTLE VESSEL DARTS OUT OF RANGE--

--ONLY TO PASS BENEATH THE FALCON, AND INTO SOLO'S SIGHTS!

WITHOUT WARNING, THE FIGHTER ERUPTS IN AN INCREDIBLE FLASH OF MULTICOLORED LIGHT!

WE DID IT, KID!

A MOMENT LATER, THEY ARE FIRING AGAIN--LUKE STRIVING TO RELAX, TO BECOME PART OF HIS WEAPON.

AND THIS TIME--IT WORKS!

YET, EVEN AS LUKE FLASHES THE CORELLIAN SMUGGLER A GRIN OF TRIUMPH--

WE'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET, SONNY!

THERE'S STILL THREE MORE OF THEM!

CORRECTION-- TWO!

ALL RIGHT... TWO, THEN! BUT WE'VE STILL LOST THE LATERAL CONTROLS FOR THE STARBOARD DEFLECTOR SHIELD!

FRONK!

DON'T WORRY, CREW! SHE'LL HOLD TOGETHER! YOU HEAR ME, SHIP?! HOLD TOGETHER!

Uh oh-- HEADS UP, GANG--

HERE THEY COME!

CHEWIE! TRY TO KEEP 'EM ON OUR PORT SIDE! IF WE--

SUDDENLY, THE CORELLIAN IS FORCED TO **BREAK OFF**, AS THE TIE-FIGHTER'S DEADLY **ENERGY BOLTS** REACH OUT TOWARD THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON**...

...AND **HAN SOLO** FINDS OUT THAT **SPACE-MERCENARIES**, TOO, CAN **PRAY!**

ALL IS **GRIM SILENCE** WITHIN THE FLEEING SMUGGLER-CRAFT...

FOR, THEY KNOW THAT **ONE DIRECT HIT** ON THE SIDE WITHOUT A **DEFLECTOR SHIELD**-- SPELLS **DOOM!**

ONE OF THE ENEMY CRAFT SUDDENLY FINDS ITSELF IN **HAN'S GUN-SIGHTS** -- AND IS INSTANTLY **VAPORIZED!**

BUT, AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE **REMAINING** TIE-FIGHTER HEADS FOR THE DEFENSELESS **STARBOARD SIDE**--

-- AND LUKE FINDS HIMSELF **FIRING STEADILY** AT IT, IGNORING THE **IMMENSELY POWERFUL ENERGY** IT THROWS AT HIM!

AT THE LAST POSSIBLE INSTANT BEFORE IT PASSES OUT OF RANGE, HE SWINGS HIS WEAPON'S **NOZZLE** MINUTELY--

-- HIS FINGER TIGHTENING CONVULSIVELY ON THE **FIRE CONTROL**--

NOW!

-- AND THE IMPERIAL FIGHTER TURNS INTO A RAPIDLY-EXPANDING CLOUD OF PHOSPHORESCING DUST!

THEN, INSIDE THE FALCON...

WE'VE MADE IT, PRINCESS!

AND THE CRY COMES BACK:

WE'VE MADE IT!!

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK, SWEETHEART?

NOT A BAD BIT OF RESCUING.

Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I AMAZE EVEN MYSELF!

THAT DOESN'T SOUND TOO HARD.

AT LEAST THE INFORMATION IN THE R2 UNIT IS STILL INTACT.

WHAT'S THAT DROID CARRYING THAT'S SO IMPORTANT, ANYWAY?

THE TECHNICAL READ-OUTS OF THAT BATTLE-STATION!

I ONLY HOPE THAT WHEN THE DATA IS ANALYZED, ITS WEAKNESS CAN BE FOUND... AND QUICKLY.

OUR ESCAPE WAS EASY... FAR TOO EASY... TO SUIT ME!

WHILE, BACK ABOARD THE FORMIDABLE BATTLE-STATION KNOWN AS DEATH STAR...

ARE THEY AWAY?

THEY HAVE JUST MADE THE JUMP TO *HYPER-SPACE*, GOVERNOR TARKIN.

GOOD. I AM TAKING A *GRAVE CHANCE*, VADER.

THIS HAD BETTER *WORK*.

ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT THE *HOMING BEACON* IS SECURE ABOARD THEIR SHIP--

--SO THAT WE CAN *FOLLOW* THEM WHEREVER THEY GO-- WHICH WILL DOUBTLESS BE THE MAIN *REBEL BASE?*

HAVE NO *FEAR*.

THIS WILL BE A DAY *LONG REMEMBERED*.

IT HAS SEEN THE END OF THE LAST OF THE *JEDI KNIGHTS*--

AND SOON, *VERY* SOON, IT WILL SEE THE *END OF THE REBELLION* ITSELF!

AS, BACK ABOARD THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, SOMEWHERE IN THE VOID KNOWN AS HYPER-SPACE...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN... OUR ESCAPE WAS "TOO EASY"!?

THEY LET US ESCAPE... DON'T YOU SEE?

THEY KNOW WE WILL TAKE R2-D2 STRAIGHT TO THE REBEL BASE--AND THEY UNDOUBTABLY MEAN TO TRAIL US THERE!

I ONLY HOPE THE DATA INSIDE ARTOO CAN BE ANALYZED QUICKLY, SO THAT WE CAN FIGHT BACK AGAINST--

CUT THAT "WE" STUFF, PRINCESS! IT'S ALL OVER FOR ME!

I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR YOUR REVOLUTION-- AND I'M NOT DOING IT FOR YOU.

I EXPECT TO BE PAID...

... WELL PAID!

YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR REWARD.

IF MONEY IS ALL THAT YOU LOVE...

... THAT IS WHAT YOU WILL RECEIVE.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

WELL??

HAN SOLO WAITS FOR HIS ANSWER... BUT THERE IS NONE.

YOUR FRIEND IS INDEED A MERCENARY, LUKE...

I WONDER IF HE REALLY CARES ABOUT *ANYTHING*...

...OR *ANY-BODY!?*

Uh-- HE-- I--

I DO, PRINCESS!

I CARE!

LUKE STARES *AFTER* THE PRINCESS/ SENATOR UNTIL SHE DISAPPEARS INTO THE *MAIN HOLD AREA*. THEN--

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HER, HAN?

I TRY *NOT* TO.

GOOD...!

LUKE HADN'T INTENDED HIS RESPONSE TO BE AUDIBLE... BUT THE QUICK-EARED SPACE PILOT OVER-HEARS IT NONE THE LESS...

STILL, SHE'S GOT A LOT OF *SPIRIT*...!

I DON'T KNOW, LUKE...

DO YOU THINK IT'S *POSSIBLE* FOR A *PRINCESS* AND A GUY LIKE *ME*--?

NO.

SOLO SMILES AT THE YOUNGER MAN'S JEALOUSY-- AND HE'S UNCERTAIN IN HIS OWN MIND WHETHER HE ADDED THE COMMENT MERELY TO BAIT HIS NAIVE FRIEND...

...OR BECAUSE IT'S THE TRUTH.

THE PLANET YAVIN, A HUGE GAS GIANT, IS NOT A HABITABLE WORLD.

SEVERAL OF YAVIN'S NUMEROUS MOONS, HOWEVER, ARE PLANET-SIZED THEMSELVES... AND THREE OF THESE CAN SUPPORT HUMANOID LIFE.

IT IS TOWARD THE SATELLITE DESIGNATED AS NUMBER FOUR, SHINING EMERALD-LIKE WITH ITS THICK JUNGLES, THAT THE MILLENNIUM FALCON FINALLY DRIFTS...

THE VERY AIR IS HEAVY WITH THE FANTASTIC CRIES OF UNIMAGINABLE CREATURES.

AND, ROTTING IN A FOREST OF GARGANTUAN TREES, AN ANCIENT TEMPLE LIES SHROUDED IN AN EERIE MIST.

BUT, THE ORIGINAL BUILDERS WOULD NOT NOW RECOGNIZE THE INTERIOR OF THEIR ONCE-MIGHTY EDIFICE.

WITHIN, SEAMED METAL HAS REPLACED ROCK, AND THE BURIED LAYERS FAR BELOW THE SURFACE CONTAIN HANGAR UPON HANGAR OF ONE-MAN FIGHTER SPACECRAFT.

IT IS TOWARD THE UPPERMOST OF THESE HANGARS THAT A LANDSPEEDER NOW STREAKS, WITH THE MAKE-SHIFT CREW OF THE BELEAGUERED FALCON...

... TO DEPOSIT FIVE OF THE SIX WHO, A SHORT TIME BEFORE, TOOK ON THE MOST DREAD WEAPON OF THE EVIL GALACTIC EMPIRE-- AND SURVIVED.

SCARCELY HAVE THEY STEPPED OFF THE LAND-SPEEDER WHEN THE NOISY CLUSTER OF HUMANS NEARBY CEASE THEIR CONVERSATION AND RUSH TOWARD THE NOW-HOVERING CRAFT...

PRINCESS LEIA!

THANK THE STARS YOU'RE SAFE!

WE HAD FEARED THE WORST!

SO DID WE.

WE-- HEARD ABOUT ALDERAAN BEING DESTROYED, AND WE WERE AFRAID YOU WERE LOST-- ALONG WITH YOUR PLANET-- AND YOUR FATHER.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR OUR SORROWS, COMMANDER WILLARD...

THE DEATH STAR HAS SURELY TRACKED US HERE.

YOU MUST USE THE INFORMATION STORED IN THIS R2 UNIT TO PLAN OUR ATTACK AGAINST IT.

WE'LL DO OUR BEST.

YOU MUST! IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE!

SOON, DEEP INSIDE THE TEMPLE, GENERAL JAN PODONNA GIVES AN URGENT AND HASTY BRIEFING, AS...

THE BATTLE-STATION CALLED DEATH STAR IS HEAVILY SHIELDED, AND CARRIES MORE FIREPOWER THAN HALF THE GALACTIC STAR FLEET.

GRUNK!

SHH! THAT OLD COOT'S STARTING...

YOU SAID IT, CHEWIE!

MAYBE LUKE WENT CRAZY AND JOINED THE REBEL PILOTS-- BUT WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE, AS SOON AS THEY GIVE US OUR REWARD.

FORTUNATELY, THE BATTLE-STATION'S *DEFENSES* ARE DESIGNED AROUND *A LARGE SCALE ASSAULT!*

A SMALL *ONE-MAN FIGHTER* SHOULD BE ABLE TO *PENETRATE* ITS DEFENSE SCREEN, AND--

PARDON ME, GENERAL DODONNA-- BUT WHAT GOOD ARE *"SNUB" FIGHTERS* GOING TO BE AGAINST *THAT?*

AN *ANALYSIS* OF THE PLANS PROVIDED BY *PRINCESS LEIA* HAVE REVEALED A *WEAKNESS* IN THE STATION...

THERE IS A SMALL, UNSHIELDED *THERMAL EXHAUST PORT* THAT RUNS DIRECTLY INTO THE *REACTOR SYSTEM.*

A *DIRECT HIT* ON IT SHOULD SET UP A *CHAIN REACTION* THAT WILL *DESTROY* THE STATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE TARGET IS ONLY *TWO METERS* ACROSS-- AND YOU WILL HAVE TO HIT IT WITH *PROTON TORPEDOES.*

HIT A *TWO METER TARGET*-- AT *MAXIMUM SPEED!?*

THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*-- EVEN FOR THE *COMPUTER!*

NO, IT ISN'T! I USED TO BULLS-EYE *WOMP-RATS* IN MY *T-16* BACK HOME.

THEY'RE NOT MUCH BIGGER THAN TWO METERS.

YOUR *APPROACH* WILL NOT BE *EASY;* YOU MUST MANEUVER STRAIGHT DOWN THIS *SHAFT* WHICH CIRCLES THE STATION.

YOU MUST LEVEL OFF IN THE *TRENCH* THERE, AND *SKIM THE SURFACE* TO THE PRECISE *TARGET AREA.*

AND REMEMBER--ONLY A *DIRECT HIT* HAS A HOPE OF DESTROYING THE *DEATH STAR--*

--BEFORE *IT* DESTROYS THIS *MOON*-- AND THE HOPE OF THE *REBELLION!*

NOW, *MAN YOUR SHIPS--*

-- AND MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!

MOMENTS LATER, ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF OTHERS, LUKE, THREEPIO, AND LITTLE ARTOO RUSH INTO THE HUGE SPACE-SHIP HANGAR.

FLIGHT CREWS BUSTLE ABOUT, LOADING LAST-MINUTE ARMAMENT AND UNLOCKING POWER COUPLINGS.

BUT, IT IS TWO DIFFERENT FIGURES THAT SUDDENLY CATCH LUKE SKYWALKER'S STARTLED ATTENTION--

--THE HUGE WOOKIEE NAMED CHEWBACCA, AND--

HAN!

SO YOU GOT YOUR REWARD-- AND YOU'RE LEAVING!

THAT'S RIGHT, KID. I'VE GOT SOME OLD DEBTS TO PAY OFF... AND EVEN IF I DIDN'T, I'D BE A FOOL TO STICK AROUND HERE.

YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD IN A SCRAP YOURSELF...

...SO WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH US?

I COULD USE YOU...!

WHY DON'T YOU LOOK AROUND, HAN?

YOU KNOW WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN... WHAT THEY'RE UP AGAINST.

THEY COULD USE A GOOD PILOT-- BUT YOU'RE TURNING YOUR BACK ON THEM!

WHAT GOOD'S A REWARD IF YOU'RE NOT AROUND TO SPEND IT?

ATTACKING THAT BATTLE-STATION ISN'T MY IDEA OF COURAGE; IT'S MORE LIKE SUICIDE.

HRUNK

SHUT UP, CHEWIE! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.

WELL... TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF, HAN...

...BUT, I GUESS THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE BEST AT, ISN'T IT?

LUKE SKYWALKER HARDLY HEARS HAN SOLO'S WHISPERED FAREWELL:

"MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!"

AS LUKE REACHES HIS ASSIGNED SHIP, PRINCESS LEIA IS THERE WAITING...

ARE YOU *SURE* THIS IS WHAT YOU *WANT* TO DO, LUKE?

MORE THAN *ANYTHING.*

THEN, WHAT'S *WRONG?*

IT'S *HAN!* I THOUGHT HE'D *CHANGE HIS MIND...*

A MAN MUST FOLLOW HIS *OWN PATH;* NO ONE CAN CHOOSE IT *FOR* HIM.

YEAH... I KNOW. I ONLY WISH... *BEN* WERE HERE.

MAY "*THE FORCE*" BE WITH YOU, LUKE!

*LUKE! I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT! HOW'D *YOU* GET MIXED UP IN THIS?

BIGGS! I *THOUGHT* YOU'D BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE!

HAVE I GOT SOME *STORIES* TO TELL YOU, OLD BUDDY!

*LUKE'S CHILDHOOD CHUM, FROM ISH #1. --Roy

ARE YOU *LUKE SKYWALKER?*

SURE *AM,* "BLUE LEADER"!

HAVE YOU BEEN CHECKED OUT ON THE *INCOM T-65?*

WELL, I... NOT *EXACTLY,* I... uh...

SIR, *LUKE* HERE IS THE *BEST BUSH-PILOT* IN THE OUTER-RIM TERRITORIES.

I'LL VOUCH FOR HIM!

OUTER RIM? SKYWALKER-- OF COURSE!

I MET YOUR FATHER ONCE, WHEN I WAS JUST A BOY! HE WAS A GREAT PILOT!

IF YOU'VE GOT HALF YOUR FATHER'S SKILL, YOU'LL DO BETTER THAN ALL RIGHT!

I'LL TRY, SIR!

AND YOU'LL MAKE IT-- I'M SURE OF IT.

THE GALAXY'LL BE A LOT BETTER OFF WHEN THE SONS OF THE ORIGINAL JEDI KNIGHTS ARE BACK ON THE SCENE!

TH-THANK YOU, SIR!

WELL, I'VE GOT TO GET ABOARD, LUKE.

LISTEN, YOU'LL TELL ME ALL YOUR STORIES WHEN WE COME BACK, ALL RIGHT?

I TOLD YOU I'D MAKE IT SOME-DAY, BIGGS!

YOU MADE IT, ALL RIGHT...

IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE OLD TIMES, LITTLE BUDDY!

WE'RE A COUPLE OF SHOOTING STARS THAT'LL NEVER BE STOPPED!

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!

AND WITH YOU, BIGGS!

WE'RE ABOUT READY, SKYBOY.

NOW YOU HOLD ON TIGHT, ARTOO! YOU'VE GOT TO COME BACK.

YOU WOULDN'T WANT MY LIFE TO GET BORING, WOULD YOU?

THIS R2 UNIT OF YOURS SEEMS A LITTLE BEAT-UP; DO YOU WANT A NEW ONE?

NOT ON YOUR LIFE! THIS DROID AND I HAVE BEEN THRU A LOT.

BLEEP!

ALL SECURE, ARTOO?

THEN LET'S GET CRACKING!

NOW, PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA STANDS SILENTLY BEFORE THE HUGE **DISPLAY SCREEN** ON WHICH YAVIN AND ITS MANY MOONS ARE DEPICTED.

UPON THAT SCREEN, A **LARGE RED DOT** MOVES STEADILY TOWARD THE **FOURTH** OF THOSE SATELLITES...

THE **RED**, PRINCESS, REPRESENTS THE PROGRESS OF THE **IMPERIAL DEATH STAR** AS IT MOVES DEEPER INTO **YAVIN'S SYSTEM.**

HOW-- HOW **LONG**, COMMANDER, BEFORE IT WILL BE ABLE TO **FIRE** ON US--AND **DESTROY** THIS WORLD?

NO MORE THAN **HALF AN HOUR.**

AND NOW--**THE SHIPS ARE AWAY!**

NEXT MOMENT, THE MUTED, GRUESOME **ANIMAL-CRIES** WHICH NATURALLY PERMEATE THIS STRANGE MOON-WORLD ARE **OVERWHELMED** BY THE THUNDERING DIN OF FOUR **ION ROCKETS--**

--AS A STREAM OF **SILVER STARSHIPS** CATAPULT FROM THE FOLIAGE IN A **TIGHT FORMATION--**

--TO **DISAPPEAR** INTO THE **MORNING CLOUD COVER!**

BLUE BOYS, THIS IS BLUE LEADER!

ADJUST YOUR **SELECTORS**, AND CHECK IN.

APPROACHING **TARGET** AT 1.3 PARSECS...

NOW--IT'S **DO OR DIE!**

OR PERHAPS **BOTH**, BLUE LEADER... PERHAPS **BOTH!**

NEXT ISSUE:
THE FINAL CHAPTER?

STAR WARS™

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THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!

STAR WARS

AT LAST! THE SOUL-SHATTERING CLIMAX OF THE YEAR'S BEST MOVIE!

TODAY YOU DIE, LUKE SKYWALKER! THIS IS YOUR FINAL BATTLE!

SEE LUKE SKYWALKER BATTLE DARTH VADER!

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BASED ON THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS, RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX.

IS THIS-- THE FINAL CHAPTER?

THIRTY MINUTES!

THAT'S HOW LONG THE MAIN REBEL BASE HAS BEFORE THE DEATH STAR, GIGANTIC BATTLE-STATION OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE, WILL BE IN A POSITION TO DESTROY IT.

NOW, LIKE ANGRY MOSQUITOS, THE REBEL FIGHTERS STREAK UPWARD FROM THEIR HIDDEN HANGARS ON THE FOURTH MOON OF YAVIN--

--TO ATTACK A TECHNOLOGICAL TERROR WHOSE FIREPOWER DWARFS THAT OF EVEN THE IMPERIAL WAR FLEET!

THIS IS IT, BOYS! NOW LET'S--

BLUE TWO --YOU'RE OUT TOO FAR! CLOSE IT UP, WEDGE!

SORRY, BOSS --MY RANGER SEEMS TO BE A FEW POINTS OFF; I'LL HAVE TO GO ON MANUAL.

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RICK HOBERG & BILL WRAY EMBELLISHERS

PATY • COLORIST
LAY & ROYER • LETTERERS

ARCHIE GOODWIN
CONSULTING EDITOR

AND SOMEWHERE-- LUKE SKYWALKER IS AMONG THEM!

"STAND BY TO LOCK "S-FOILS" IN ATTACK POSITIONS!"

BLUE TWO STANDING BY, BLUE LEADER.

BLUE THREE STANDING BY.

BLUE FOUR STANDING BY.

BLUE FIVE STANDING BY.

BLUE SIX STANDING BY.

EXECUTE!

LIKE NARROW SEEDS, THE **DOUBLE WINGS** ON THE X-WING FIGHTERS SUDDENLY **SPLIT APART.**

THE SHIPS HAVE NOW BECOME DEADLY, X-SHAPED **DARTS,** THEIR WING-MOUNTED ARMAMENT AND QUADRUPLE ENGINES NOW DEPLOYED FOR **MAXIMUM FIREPOWER AND MANEUVERABILITY.**

THEIR **TARGET:** THE LOOMING, EVER-NEARER **DEATH STAR!**

AND, IN THE COCKPIT OF "BLUE FIVE," ALIAS **LUKE SKYWALKER:**

BLUE LEADER, HERE! WE'RE PASSING THROUGH THEIR MAGNETIC SHIELDS-- **HOLD TIGHT!**

LOCK DOWN YOUR **CONTROL UNITS**--SWITCH YOUR **DEFLECTOR SHIELDS** ON-- **DOUBLE FRONT!**

CHECK, BLUE LEADER!

KEEP THE CHANNELS **QUIET** UNTIL WE'VE REACHED THE **SURFACE!**

ALL SIX MEN OF **BLUE GROUP**--AND THOSE OF THE **OTHERS,** AS WELL--KNOW THAT THEY HAVE **NO CHANCE** OF DENTING THE **IMPREGNABLE DEFENSES...**

YET, THE **REBEL LEADER** SPOKE EARLIER OF ITS **ONE WEAKNESS** WHICH MAY BE EXPLOITED IF THE SPACE-GODS ARE KIND:

"THERE IS A SMALL, UNSHIELDED ***THERMAL EXHAUST PORT*** THAT RUNS DIRECTLY INTO THE ***REACTOR SYSTEM.***

"A ***DIRECT HIT*** ON IT SHOULD SET UP A ***CHAIN REACTION*** THAT WILL ***DESTROY*** THE STATION.

"YOU MUST MANEUVER STRAIGHT DOWN THE ***SHAFT*** WHICH CIRCLES THE STATION; YOU MUST LEVEL OFF IN THE ***TRENCH*** THERE, AND ***SKIM THE SURFACE TO THE PRECISE TARGET AREA.***

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE TARGET IS ONLY ***TWO METERS*** ACROSS--AND YOU WILL HAVE TO HIT IT WITH ***PROTON TORPEDOES!"***

WHILE, **WITHIN** THE DEATH STAR ITSELF...

REEEEE

THERE GOES THE ***ALARM!***

THE ***REBELS*** ARE COMING OUT TO MEET US IN ***FORCE!***

THE ***FOOLS!*** DON'T THEY ***REALIZE*** THIS BATTLE-STATION IS NOW THE ***ULTIMATE POWER IN THE UNIVERSE?***

WHAT CHANCE DO A FEW ***X-WING FIGHTERS*** HAVE AGAINST ***US?***

THEY'RE ***MAD,*** THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE!

WHY AREN'T THEY SIMPLY ***DEFENDING*** THEMSELVES ON ***YAVIN'S FOURTH MOON*** AS WE EXPECTED?

NO MATTER! WE'LL BLAST THEM RIGHT OUT OF THE ***SKY!***

WITHIN MOMENTS, A ***WEB OF ANNIHILATION*** ENVELOPS THE APPROACHING STATION--

--AS ***ENERGY BOLTS*** AND ***EXPLOSIVE SOLIDS*** RIP OUT AT THE ON-COMING ***REBEL CRAFT.***

THEN, AS ***BLUE GROUP*** DRAWS NEAR THE BATTLE-STATION...

BLUE THREE, THIS IS ***BLUE FIVE!*** HI, BIGGS!

HI YOURSELF, LUKE! WHAT--?

I'M GOING IN, BLUE THREE!

I COVER ME!

I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BLUE FIVE!

NEXT INSTANT, BLINDING LASERBOLTS STREAK FROM LUKE'S WEAPONS, CREATING A HUGE FIRE-BALL ON THE BATTLE-STATION'S DIM SURFACE--A FIREBALL HE CANNOT AVOID!

PULL OUT, LUKE! PULL OUT!

I-- I CAN'T!!

UNABLE TO TURN IN TIME, LUKE'S FIGHTER PLUNGES INTO THE EXPANDING BALL OF SUPER-HEATED GASES--

--WHERE LUKE SKYWALKER KNOWS THE TERRORS OF THE DAMNED!

INTENSE HEAT LICKS AT THE STREAKING SPACE-CRAFT--THE HOT WINDS OF HELL BUFFET IT TO AND FRO UNTIL LUKE'S TEETH RATTLE--

THEN, HE IS THROUGH AND CLEAR ON THE OTHER SIDE!

YOU ALL RIGHT, LUKE?

I GOT A LITTLE COOKED, BUT I'M OKAY!

AND, MOVING AMID THE CHAOS WITH THE EMBATTLED DEATH STAR IS... DARTH VADER!

WE COUNT AT LEAST THIRTY REBEL SHIPS, LORD VADER--BUT THEY'RE SO SMALL, THEY'RE EVADING OUR TURBO-LASERS!

GET THE CREWS TO THEIR FIGHTERS, AND PREPARE TO LIFT OUT IMMEDIATELY!

THIS STATION IS NOT DESIGNED TO DO BATTLE WITH SUCH PUNY, INSIGNIFICANT SPACE-CRAFT... AND THAT COULD BE ITS FATAL FLAW!

WE'LL HAVE TO DESTROY THE REBELS, SHIP TO SHIP!

YES, LORD VADER!

ANOTHER HIT! THE REBELS ARE GOOD--TOO GOOD TO TAKE ANY CHANCES WITH!

PREPARE MY OWN PERSONAL SHIP!

FROOM!

Y--YES, MILORD!

I'LL DEAL MYSELF WITH ANY WHO DARE COME TOO CLOSE!

AS DARTH VADER PREPARES TO DO BATTLE, THE REBEL SPACE-CRAFT CONTINUE THEIR ENERGY-RUNS...

AND LUKE, RECALLING HIS EARLIER WISECRACK, REFLECTS THAT IT REALLY IS LIKE HUNTING WOMP-RATS BACK HOME IN THE CRUMBLING CANYONS OF TATOOINE!

THEN, FROM THE REBEL WAR ROOM COMES AN URGENT MESSAGE--

ATTENTION, SQUAD LEADERS!

WE'VE PICKED UP A NEW GROUP OF SIGNALS.

ENEMY FIGHTERS COMING YOUR WAY!

HOW MANY OF THEM GENERAL DODONNA? ENOUGH TO--?

NO WAY WE CAN TELL, PRINCESS.

AND, OUT IN SPACE--

MY SCOPE'S NEGATIVE!

I DON'T SEE ANYTHING! I--WAIT A MINUTE--!

HERE THEY COME!

I'D FEEL BETTER IF HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA WERE HERE!

BUT, HAN GOT HIS REWARD FOR HELPING SAVE THE PRINCESS, AND THAT'S ALL HE SEEMS TO--

BIGGS!

LOOK OUT!

THE ENEMY'S SWOOPING AROUND US--THEY'RE MORE MANEUVERABLE THAN WE THOUGHT--!

YOU'VE PICKED UP ONE!

WATCH IT!

I CAN'T SEE IT! WHERE IS HE??

LUKE SKYWALKER WATCHES HELPLESSLY AS THE BOYHOOD CHUM'S SHIP SHOOTS AWAY FROM THE STATION SURFACE AND OUT INTO CLEAR SPACE--

--STILL WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE ENEMY BOLT PASSING A BIT CLOSER TO HIS HULL!

HE'S ON ME TIGHT! I CAN'T SHAKE HIM.

I CAN'T SHAKE HIM!

HANG ON, BIGGS! I'M COMING IN!

THE NEXT MOMENT, ELECTRONIC CROSSHAIRS LINE UP IN LUKE'S GUNSIGHTS--THERE IS A SMALL EXPLOSION IN THE VAST SILENCE OF THE COSMOS--

--AND THE IMPERIAL PILOT IS VAPORIZED WITH HIS SHIP!

GOT HIM!

WITHIN THE **REBEL TEMPLE-FORTRESS** ON YAVIN'S MOON, **LEIA** AND HER **GENERALS** ARE OBSERVING THE ACTIONS ONE SECOND ON A **SPACIOUS SCREEN**--

--AND THE **FOLLOWING** INSTANT--

THE IMAGE HAS **FADED,** PRINCESS! THE HIGH-BAND RECEIVE HAS **FAILED!**

THEN SWITCH TO **AUDIO** ONLY--AND DO THE BEST YOU **CAN!**

OH **DEAR!** EVEN WITH **ARTOO DETOO** SERVING AS HIS **R2 UNIT,** MASTER LUKE IS LIKELY TO BE **HURT.**

I **DO** WISH HE WOULDN'T TAKE SO MANY **CHANCES.**

SO DO **I,** THREE-PIO...

SO DO **I!**

MEANWHILE, HIGH ABOVE, **BLUE FOUR** HAS BECOME THE **FIRST** REBEL CRAFT OF BLUE GROUP TO **FALL** BEFORE THE DEADLY IMPERIAL **LASERBOLTS...**

...AND **LUKE SKYWALKER** LOOKS AS IF HE MAY SOON BECOME THE **SECOND!**

TIE FIGHTER ON MY TAIL!

CAN'T **SHAKE** HIM!

BLUE TWO HERE.

I'M **ON** HIM, LUKE.

HOLD ON!

THE **YOUNGEST** OF THE REBEL PILOTS DOESN'T HAVE TO **WAIT** VERY **LONG...**

THANKS, WEDGE! I--

WAIT!

BLUE SIX IS HIT!

COME IN, BLUE SIX!

PORKINS! DO YOU READ? **EJECT!**

EJECT!

I-I'M **OKAY!** I CAN **HOLD** HER! JUST--

THOSE ARE THE **LAST WORDS** EVER UTTERED BY THE MAN LUKE SKYWALKER KNOWS ONLY AS **BLUE SIX.**

BUT **BIGGS** HAS FOUGHT BESIDE **LT. TONO PORKINS** FOR LONG WEEKS AND MONTHS, AND **HE** KNOWS SUDDENLY WHAT IT MEANS TO LOSE... A **FRIEND.**

SO LONG, PIGGY.

YOU WILL BE **AVENGED!**

AT THAT MOMENT, **BLUE LEADER** COMMENCES HIS **OWN** APPROACH TO THE **DEATH STAR'S SURFACE...**

...HIS TWO **WING-MEN** SO FAR BEHIND HIM THAT HE SEEMS **ALONE** IN THE VAST GRAY **TRENCH** WHICH LEADS TO THE TARGET **THERMAL EXHAUST PORT** AHEAD.

SUDDENLY, **INTENSE STREAKS OF LIGHT** SHOOT CLOSE BY, AS THE **TRENCH DEFENSES** OPEN UP--

FOOM

--AND **NEAR MISSES** BATTER BLUE LEADER'S **WING-MEN**, FOR WHAT SEEMS AN **ETERNITY!**

THEN, JUST AS ABRUPTLY, THE ENERGY-BOLTS **CEASE**, AND ALL IS **SILENT** AND **DARK** AGAIN IN THE TRENCH.

THIS IS **IT!**

THEY MUST HAVE TURNED OFF THE FIREWORKS FOR A **REASON.**

CHECK! KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR--

IMPERIAL FIGHTERS!

THERE THEY ARE-- COMING IN AT **.35!**

YET, SEEING THEM IS NOT THE SAME AS **EVADING** THEM--

--AS THE **FOREMOST** OF THE EMPIRE'S SHIPS DOWNS FIRST **ONE** WING-MAN, THEN THE **OTHER**, WITH LETHAL **PRECISION!**

SPWEEE

AND... WITHIN THAT SHIP...

...**DARTH VADER'S** EYES DOUBTLESS **NARROW**, THEY FALL UPON THE SCREEN-IMAGE OF **BLUE LEADER** HIMSELF...

HE'S GETTING **TOO CLOSE** TO OUR **VULNERABLE POINT!**

YOU TWO **GO BACK!**

I SHALL HANDLE HIM **PERSONALLY!**

I'M IN *RANGE!* TARGET IN *SIGHT.*

IF I CAN *JUST--*

NOW!

AAAA

BLUE LEADER'S **PROTON TORPEDOES** *WERE LAUNCHED A MICRO-SECOND* **BEFORE** *THE FATAL ENERGY-BOLT FROM THE* **LORD OF THE SITH** *SENT HIS SHIP* **HURTLING DOWNWARD** *TO SMASH BRILLIANTLY BUT HARMLESSLY AGAINST THE* **DEATH STAR HULL.**

PERHAPS IT IS **MERCY**, *OF A SORT, THAT HE WILL* **NEVER KNOW** *THAT HIS TORPEDOES* **MISSED** *THE TWO-METER TARGET BY THE* **MEREST FRACTION.**

LOOKING DOWN, **LUKE** *FOR THE FIRST TIME FEELS THE TRUE* **HELPLESSNESS** *OF HIS SITUATION...*

WE'VE... LOST BLUE LEADER.

HE SCARCELY **CARES** *IF HIS WORDS ARE HEARD BACK ON* **YAVIN FOUR.**

NOW, THERE IS JUST **HIMSELF...**

...AND **WEDGE...**

...AND **BIGGS.**

OKAY, YOU TWO-- THIS IS LUKE-- BLUE FIVE...

CLOSE IT UP! WE'RE *GOING IN!!*

AND DEEP INSIDE THE DEATH STAR...

GOVENOR TARKIN-- I HAVE CHECKED ALL COORDINATES, AS YOU ORDERED... AND I FIND THAT THERE IS A DANGER, HOWEVER SMALL.

SHALL I HAVE YOUR PERSONAL CRAFT STAND BY FOR POSSIBLE EVACUATION?

EVACUATE? NEVER!

THE VERY IDEA IS TREASONOUS.

WE SHALL PREVAIL-- IN THE NAME OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE!

WHILE, OVERHEAD, LUKE SKYWALKER HAS SUDDENLY DISCOVERED THAT ONE OF HIS KEY INSTRUMENTS IS MALFUNCTIONING...

BLAST! IF ARTOO CAN'T PUT ME BACK IN TOUCH WITH COMPUTER CENTRAL BACK ON YAVIN-4--

--I'LL HAVE TO AIM THE PROTON TORPEDOES MANUALLY, AND THAT'S NOT AS ACCURATE AS--

TRUST YOUR FEELINGS, LUKE--!

HUH? WHO--?

IT IS A YOUNG-OLD VOICE WHICH SOUNDS IN HIS EARS... A FAMILIAR VOICE...

...A VOICE AT ONCE CALM, CONFIDENT, CONTENTED... AND REASSURING.

A VOICE HE HAS LISTENED TO INTENTLY ON THE DESERT OF TATOOINE... AND ELSEWHERE.

BEN! BEN KENOBI!!

THEN-- MAYBE HE WASN'T KILLED BY DARTH VADER'S LIGHTSABRE, AFTER ALL!

MAYBE HE MERGED, SOMEHOW, WITH "THE FORCE"--AND HE'S HERE WITH ME IN SPIRIT-- RIGHT NOW!

THEN MAYBE THERE'S A CHANCE FOR US, AT THAT-- EVEN AGAINST DARTH VADER AND THE DEATH STAR!

WEDGE-- BIGGS-- WE'RE GOING IN-- FULL THROTTLE!

IT'LL BE JUST LIKE BEGGARS' CANYON BACK HOME!

WE'RE WITH YOU, BOSS!

YOU WORRY ABOUT TARGET ZERO-- WE'LL HANDLE THOSE IMPERIAL FIGHTERS FOLLOWING US INTO THE TRENCH!

BLUE THREE HERE--WE SEEM TO HAVE *UPSET* THEM! WE--

BIGGS! THERE'S ANOTHER ONE ON YOUR *TAIL!*

WEDGE AND I CAN'T DROP BACK TO *COVER* YOU THIS TIME--!

THEN *DON'T!*

CONCENTRATE ON HITTING THAT *EXHAUST PORT*, AND BLOWING THAT STATION TO *KINGDOM COME!*

THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT M--

JUST THEN, WITH INHUMAN PRECISION, DARTH VADER DEPRESSES THE FIRE-BUTTON OF HIS SHIP AGAIN --

--AND A LOUD, DESPERATE *SHOUT* SOUNDS OVER THE SPEAKERS--

AAA

SKREEEEE

--BLENDING INTO A FINAL AGONIZED *SCREAM OF FLESH AND METAL*--

I... *COPY*, BLUE TWO! NOW *SHUT UP*--

--AND *KEEP ON FLYING!*

--AS *BIGGS' X-FIGHTER* BURSTS INTO A *BILLION GLOWING SPLINTERS* THAT RAIN DOWN UPON THE BOTTOM OF THE NIGHT-DARK *TRENCH!*

LUKE! WE LOST BIGGS! DO YOU COPY?

WE LOST BIGGS !!

WHAT WAS IT LUKE SAID TO BIGGS, A SHORT ETERNITY AGO?

"YOU'LL ALWAYS BE THE *BEST FRIEND* I'VE GOT."

NOW, WITH **RED GROUP** BEATEN OFF AND **BLUE GROUP** ALL BUT ANNIHILATED BY ENEMY FIRE, ONLY **LUKE** AND **WEDGE** REMAIN...

CLOSE IT UP, WEDGE! YOU CAN'T DO ANY MORE **GOOD** BACK THERE.

CHECK! BUT-- I'VE **PICKED UP** ONE... AND WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S A **DEVIL** OF A FLYER!

AND, HOT ON WEDGE'S ROCKETING HEELS COMES ...**DARTH VADER!**

HIS JEDI-BORN **INSTINCTS** TELL HIM THAT THE GREAT **BATTLE-STATION** HE SERVES IS ONLY **SECONDS** AWAY FROM BEING ABLE TO **DESTROY** THE REBEL FORTRESS ON **YAVIN-4**...

...AND NO MERE **PAIR OF UPSTARTS** MUST BE ALLOWED TO STOP THE **IMPERIAL JUGGERNAUT.**

LUKE-- I'VE GOT A **MAL-FUNCTION!**

I CAN'T STAY **WITH** YOU.

OKAY, WEDGE, **GET CLEAR,** IF YOU CAN!

SORRY...!

IF HE HAD HOPED TO LURE THE **IMPERIAL SHIPS** AWAY, BLUE TWO'S HOPES ARE SWIFTLY **DASHED...**

...AS THEY **IGNORE** HIS SHIP, AND BEAR DOWN ON LUKE'S FIGHTER-- **GAINING WITH EACH PASSING INSTANT!**

HE WILL BE **IN RANGE** IN ANOTHER **SECOND!**

PREPARE TO FI--

ONE OF THE THREE TIE-FIGHTERS HAS SUDDENLY BECOME AN EXPANDING CYLINDER OF **DECOMPOSING DEBRIS...**

BY THE IMMORTAL GODS OF THE SITH!

LORD VADER! THAT ENERGY-BOLT CAME FROM **ABOVE** US!

BUT, WHO IS **LEFT** TO--?

THEN, FROM **OUT OF YAVIN'S SUN**, OR SO IT SEEMS, COMES A **NEW** THREAT, FOR WHICH THE PURSUING TIE-FIGHTERS ARE **NOT PREPARED**:

A **SPACE-FREIGHTER** THAT DOES NOT **MOVE** LIKE A FREIGHTER, SOMEHOW-- BUT **FASTER**--**SURER**.

ITS NAME IS THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON**--

--AND ITS CAPTAIN, **HAN SOLO**, IS ONE OF THE **BEST PILOTS** IN THE GALAXY!

THE FALCON'S INTERVENTION CAUSES VADER'S WING-MAN TO **VEER OFF** SUDDENLY, STRIKING HIS **LORD'S SHIP** AS HE GOES!

THEN, AS THE WING-CRAFT IS **OBLITERATED** AGAINST THE SIDE OF THE TRENCH, THE **REMAINING** SHIP GOES **SPINNING OFF** INTO THE BLACKNESS--

ABOARD IT, **DARTH VADER** FINDS HIMSELF WHIRLING AROUND, HIS INSTRUMENTS SHATTERED, HIS VESSEL WILDLY **OUT OF CONTROL**--

--AND HEADING OUT INTO THE ENDLESS REACHES OF **DEEP SPACE!**

THEN, OVER HIS HEAD-PHONES, LUKE SKY-WALKER HEARS STILL **ANOTHER** FAMILIAR, WELCOME VOICE:

YOU'RE **ALL CLEAR**, KID!

NOW **BLOW** THIS THING, SO WE CAN ALL **GO HOME!**

GRONK!

LUKE IS ABOUT TO REPLY WHEN--

LUKE... TRUST ME...!

HE HESITATES A MOMENT. THEN--

BASE ONE TO BLUE FIVE-- YOUR TARGET DEVICE IS OFF!

WHAT'S WRONG?

NOTHING! I'M NOT GOING TO USE THE COMPUTER--

I'M SWITCHING TO MANUAL!

MANUAL!? ARE YOU INSANE? YOU CAN'T HIT A TARGET TWO METERS WIDE WITHOUT THE COMPUTER!

BLUE FIVE, ARE YOU THERE? COME IN, BLUE FIVE!

THE YOUNG SPACE-PILOT DOES NOT RESPOND -- UNLESS IT IS BY PUSHING A BUTTON ON THE CONTROL-PANEL BEFORE HIM --

--TO HIT A NARROW TARGET LUKE SKYWALKER HAS NOT EVEN SEEN!

AGAIN, THE WORDS OF BEN KENOBI COME TO HIM FROM OUT OF THE RECENT PAST:

"YOUR EYES CAN DECEIVE YOU. DON'T TRUST THEM! STRETCH OUT YOUR FEELINGS!"

HE DID.

GOOD SHOT, KID! THAT WAS ONE IN A MILLION!

GLAD YOU WERE HERE TO SEE IT! NOW, LET'S GET SOME DISTANCE--

--BEFORE THAT THING GOES SUPER-NOVA!

BEHIND THEM, SMALL FLASHES OF FADING LIGHT MARK THE RECEDING BATTLE-STATION...

THEN, WITHOUT WARNING-- THE ETERNAL NIGHT OF SPACE BECOMES, FOR A FEW SECONDS, THE BRIGHTNESS OF DAY!

NO ONE DARES LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE EXPLODING BATTLE-STATION--

--NOT EVEN MULTIPLE SHIELDS SET ON HIGH COULD DIM THAT AWESOME GLARE SUFFICIENTLY TO PREVENT PERMANENT BLINDNESS.

THE UNIVERSE SEEMS FILLED FOR AN INSTANT WITH TRILLIONS OF MICROSCOPIC METAL FRAGMENTS, PROPELLED PAST THE RETREATING SHIPS BY THE LIBERATED ENERGY OF A SMALL ARTIFICIAL SUN.

THE COLLAPSED RESIDUE OF THE DEATH STAR WILL CONTINUE TO CONSUME ITSELF FOR SEVERAL DAYS--

--FORMING, FOR THAT BRIEF SPAN OF TIME, THE MOST IMPRESSIVE TOMBSTONE IN THIS CORNER OF THE COSMOS.

FOLLOWING WEDGE AND HAN TO **TOUCH DOWN** IN THE HANGER ON YAVIN-4, LUKE SOON FINDS HIMSELF IN THE CENTER OF A **CHEERFUL, GLEAMING THRONG** THAT INCLUDES TECHNICIANS AND GENERALS **ALIKE...**

TECHNICOS! HURRY UP AND SEE TO MY **R2 UNIT** HERE!

HE TOOK SOME BAD **HITS** UP THERE!

OH MY! **ARTOO,** CAN YOU HEAR ME? YOU CAN **REPAIR** HIM, CAN'T YOU?

WE'LL DO OUR **BEST.**

YOU MUST!

IF ANY OF **MY** CIRCUITS OR GEARS WILL HELP, I'LL GLADLY **DONATE** THEM!

HAN, YOU OLD SPACE-DEVIL! I **KNEW** YOU'D COME BACK IN TIME TO KEEP ME FROM WINDING UP **SPACE-DUST!**

WELL, I COULDN'T LET A **FLYING FARMBOY** GO UP AGAINST THE DEATH STAR ALL BY **HIMSELF,** COULD I?

BESIDES, I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GET ALL THE **CREDIT!**

AND, AS THEY LAUGH, A **LITHE FIGURE,** ROBES FLOWING, RUSHES UP TO EMBRACE LUKE IN A VERY **UNSEN-ATORIAL** FASHION.

YOU **DID** IT, LUKE!

YOU DID IT!!

AND **YOU,** YOU BIG **CORELLIAN**--I KNEW THERE WAS **MORE** TO YOU THAN **MONEY!**

ONCE IN A WHILE, PRINCESS--

ONCE IN A WHILE!

GAZING **UPWARD** TOWARD THE CEILING, **LUKE SKYWALKER** THINKS FOR A PASSING MOMENT HE HEARS SOME-THING OVERHEAD...

...SOMETHING FAINTLY LIKE A **GRATIFIED SIGH.**

OF COURSE, IT IS PROBABLY ONLY THE INTRUDING **HOT WIND** OF A STEAMING **JUNGLE WORLD...**

BUT, LUKE PREFERS TO THINK **OTHERWISE.**

Epilogue: IN THE VAST AND ANCIENT CHAMBER, THE **BANNERS OF MANY WORLDS** FLUTTER... WORLDS WHICH HAVE **LENT SUPPORT** TO THE REBEL ALLIANCE DURING ITS MOST DIFFICULT DAYS.

TODAY, HUNDREDS OF **REBEL TROOPS AND TECHNICIANS** STAND ASSEMBLED IN PRESSED UNIFORMS AND POLISHED SEMI-ARMOR, TO HONOR THOSE WHO STOOD AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE **GALACTIC EMPIRE.**

AND, AT THE **FAR END** OF AN OPEN AISLE, STANDS A **VISION IN WHITE--**

--THE PRINCESS **LEIA ORGANA.**

IT TAKES A FULL **MINUTE** FOR THE **TRIO OF FIGURES** AT THE OTHER END TO COVER THE DISTANCE TO THE **RAISED DAIS** WHERE SHE STANDS...

...AND SEVERAL TIMES, IT SEEMS AS IF THE **GIGANTIC, FURRY ONE** WILL BOLT AND **RUN!**

THEN, WORDLESSLY, PRINCESS LEIA PLACES **GOLD MEDALLIONS** FIRST AROUND **HAN SOLO'S** NECK...THEN **LUKE SKYWALKER'S.**

CHEWBACCA THE WOOKIEE, TOO, WILL HAVE HIS **OWN** MEDAL... BUT HE WILL HAVE TO PUT IT ON **HIMSELF.**

FEW SPACE-PRINCESSES ARE **THAT** TALL.

THEN, JOINED BY A FULLY-REPAIRED **ARTOO DETOO** AND A BEAMING **SEE THREEPIO...**

--THEY STAND AWASH IN THE **CHEERS AND SHOUTS** OF A GRATEFUL ALLIANCE!

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THESE SIX DARING SOULS, ONLY **TIME** AND THE **SPACE-WINDS** KNOW.

BUT, FOR TODAY... FOR NOW... THEY ARE **CONTENT.**

NEXT ISSUE: **A NEW ADVENTURE OF THE STAR WARRIORS!**

STAR WARS™

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS™

ALL NEW! HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA ON A WORLD THE LAW FORGOT!

GRAB A LASER-GUN, CHEWIE! THEY'VE GOT US SURROUNDED!

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA THE WOOKIEE REWARD

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS™ THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS, RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

NEW PLANETS, NEW PERILS!

THE DREADED DEATH STAR IS NO MORE... AND THE EVIL DARTH VADER, ITS SOLE SURVIVOR, IS FLEEING ACROSS THE GALAXY, LOST FROM THE SIGHT OF MEN. *

AND, ON THE FOURTH MOON OF YAVIN, OLD FRIENDS SAY FOND GOOD-BYES WHICH CAN NO LONGER BE DELAYED:

GRONK!

WELL, S'LONG, LUKE... YOU TOO, PRINCESS.

I STILL WISH YOU WERE COMING WITH US, KID-- YOU'D MAKE A HELLUVA STAR-HOPPER.

THANKS, HAN... AND CHEWBACCA! BUT YOU KNOW I'VE GOT TO STAY HERE... AT LEAST TILL WE CAN SCOUT UP A NEW WORLD TO BECOME THE MAIN REBEL BASE.

ONCE DARTH VADER ESTABLISHES CONTACT WITH THE EMPIRE AGAIN, THE YAVIN SYSTEM WILL NO LONGER BE SAFE FOR US.

THE REBELLION MUST CONTINUE ELSEWHERE... EVEN WITHOUT YOU, HAN.

STOP SNIVELING, ARTOO! YOU'LL SEE MASTER SOLO AGAIN.

BLOOP

HE SURE WILL! WHATEVER YOU DO, LUKE-- WHEREVER YOU GO-- I'LL FIND YOU ALL AFTER I'VE DONE WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO.

THAT'S A PROMISE FROM HAN SOLO!

*AS SEEN IN LAST ISSUE'S CONCLUSION OF OUR ADAPTATION OF THE FILM. --ROY.

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MOMENTS LATER, THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** STREAKS SKYWARD, TILL FIRST THE SATELLITE, THEN YAVIN, THEN YAVIN'S FIERY **SUN** IS LOST TO VIEW...

...ONE MORE FLICKERING **POINT OF FLAME** IN AN VAST BLACK **OCEAN.**

WELL, CHEWIE... WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

GUH-RYK!

YEAH, I **KNOW!** AFTER ALL THAT **BATTLE ACTION,** I'D GIVE MY **STAR-SPURS** TO STAY THERE AND HELP PRINCESS LEIA RE-GROUP THE **REBELS.**

BUT YOU **FORGET,** WE'VE BOTH GOT A **PRICE** ON OUR HEADS--

--OR AT LEAST WE **WILL** HAVE, IF WE DON'T GET BACK TO **DANTOOINE** AND PAY **JABBA THE HUT** THE MONEY WE PROMISED HIM!*

*ISSUE #2. --R.T.

GET A **SMUGGLING CZAR** ON YOUR TAIL, OL' BUDDY, AND EVEN A **GALACTIC WAR** WON'T SAVE YOU!

AS SOON AS THE CRATERS COOLED, **JABBA'D** HAVE US BOTH **ZAPPED** BY ONE OF HIS BLASTER-HAPPY **BONGOS!**

URK!

YEAH, I **THOUGHT** YOU'D SEE IT MY WAY.

SO, SET 'EM FOR **TATOOINE...** NEXT STOP, **MOS EISLEY** SPACEPORT...

"...THOUGH WE'VE A FEW MORE **LIGHT-YEARS** TO GO BEFORE WE EVEN CUT TO **HYPER-SPACE!**"

AFTER ALL, LOOK AT THE *BRIGHT* SIDE, CHEWBACCA, OLD CHUM...

EVEN *AFTER* WE PAY OFF JABBA, THERE'S STILL ENOUGH LEFT OF THE *TREASURE* THE REBS GAVE US TO BUY A *SMALL PLANET* WHERE WE CAN--

UH OH! SOME KIND OF *CRUISER* AT TWO-O'CLOCK PRIME!

'SCOPE SHOWS IT'S *DRIFTING*... COULD JUST BE A *DERELICT*.

AT LEAST IT'S NOT AN *EMPIRE* SHIP, SO WHAT THE HECK-- HOW BAD COULD IT *BE*?

HAROOOO

Y'KNOW, YOU'VE GOT A *POINT* THERE, PAL.

IT COULD VERY *WELL* BE--

SPACE-PIRATES!

GIVE 'ER THE *GUN*, CHEWIE! WE'RE MAKING A *RUN* FOR IT!!

ALREADY, HOWEVER, IT IS **FAR TOO LATE** TO OUTDISTANCE, THE VARIOUS TYPES OF **FIGHTERCRAFT** WHICH ISSUE, GUNS BLAZING, FROM THE METAL BELLY OF THE **MOTHER SHIP.**

GOT 'IM!

ONLY THE FALCON'S **DEFLECTOR SHIELDS**, SPECIALLY MODIFIED BY SOLO, PROTECT HIM AS HE MANS THE **FORWARD LASER-CANNON...**

...AND **REMINDS** THE COSMIC BUCCANEERS JUST **WHY** HE'S SURVIVED SO LONG AS A **SPACE-MERCENARY.**

YET, ALL THE **WHILE...**

...THE GIANT **CRUISER** MOVES INTO **POSITION...**

...SO THAT, MOMENTS LATER...

BLAST IT! **TRACTOR BEAM**'S GOT US!

SHE'S **SWALLOWING** US UP FOR **BOARDING!**

HRUNK!

YOU'RE NOT AS MAD AS **I** AM, CHEWIE!

SERVES ME **RIGHT** FOR THINKING ABOUT **MONEY** WHEN I SHOULD'VE BEEN CHECKING THE **'SCOPE.**

TO BE SWALLOWED UP BY THE **DEATH STAR** WAS ONE THING*...BUT **SPACE-PIRATES**--!

*ISH #3. --ROY.

I DON'T KNOW **WHO** OUR OVER-EAGER **HOST** IS, BUT ONE THING'S CERTAIN:

HE SURE **GETS AROUND!**

X-WINGERS...TIE-FIGHTERS...**EVERY** KIND OF SMALL BATTLE-SPACER I'VE **SEEN!**

AND **I'VE** BEEN FROM **ONE** END OF THE GALAXY TO THE **OTHER!**

IT'S **WELL** PERHAPS, THAT HE **HAS...**

...FOR, WITHIN MINUTES, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON HAS ITS FIRST, IF UNWELCOME **PASSENGERS** SINCE LUKE SKYWALKER, BEN KENOBI, AND COMPANY.

THOUGH ALL ARE MORE OR LESS **HUMAN**, THEY ARE AS **VARIED** IN PLANETARY ORIGIN AS THEY ARE INVARIABLY **GRIM.**

THE GARB OF BOTH **CIVILIZED** AND **SEMI-CIVILIZED** STAR-SYSTEMS SPARKLES IN THE CORRIDORS... **RAY-GUNS** GLITTER NEXT TO ARCHAIC **CUTLASSES.** THERE IS EVEN THE WHITE, STOIC ARMOR OF A FALLEN **STORM-TROOPER,** STRANGE-LY OUT OF PLACE.

AND, STRIDING **THRU** ALL THE DIN AND CLAMOR... A RED-BEARDED **MAN IN BLACK.**

GRONK!

YEAH, IT'S **MOMENT-OF-TRUTH** TIME, ALL RIGHT, FURRY BUDDY.

DO WE MAKE A **STAND** FOR IT, OR--?

I'M AFRAID **THAT** CHOICE HAS ALREADY BEEN **MADE**... FOR **BOTH** OF YOU.

DROP IT, STAR-HOPPERS... BEFORE **I** DROP **YOU!**

THAT'S BETTER! HE'S ALL **YOURS,** CAP'N.

NICE WORK, JOLLI.

I'M GLAD HE **DIDN'T** FORCE YOU TO KILL HIM.

I'D **HATE** TO HAVE TO BURY THE ILLUSTRIOUS **HAN SOLO.**

WELL THEN THERE NOW, IF IT ISN'T **CRIMSON JACK!**

LONG TIME, NO **SEE**--BUT NOT LONG **ENOUGH.**

STILL A **JOKER,** EH, SOLO?

I GET BY.

BUT WHEN DID A **SECOND-CLASS SCAVENGER** LIKE YOU PICK UP EVEN A **CAST-OFF** CRUISER?

LAST **I** RECALL, YOU WERE STILL AMBUSHING **SPICE-CARAVANS** ON THE **OUTER RIM.**

WE'VE WASTED ENOUGH **TIME,** CAP'N. LET ME BLAST A **HOLE** IN 'EM.

AND I SEE THE **COMPANY** YOU KEEP IS AS **CHARMING** AS EVER.

WHERE'D YOU PICK UP **MISS SUNSHINE,** JACK?

WHY, YOU NOVA-HAPPY--! I'LL--!

THAT'S NOT WHAT WE *CAME* FOR, JOLLI.

I'M *SURE* MR. SOLO HAS SOME *CARGO* OF CONSIDERABLY MORE VALUE TO US THAN HIS MISSPENT *LIFE*.

WELL SOLO? YOU HAVE UNTIL THE *COUNT OF THREE*...!

YOU'VE GOT ALL THE *HIGH NUMBERS*, REDBEARD. *OKAY*, CHEWIE...

LET'S SHOW 'EM THE *LOOT*!

HRUMP

...*AMAZING!* WHERE DID A PAIR OF *STAR-HOPPERS* GET SO MUCH *TREASURE*?

LET'S JUST SAY A *MAIDEN AUNT* LEFT IT TO ME, OKAY?

AND, I'M SORRY TO SAY, THERE'S *NO MORE* WHERE THIS *CAME* FROM.

THIS WILL BE QUITE *SUFFICIENT*... FOR THE *PRESENT*.

THAT'S THE *LAST* OF IT, CAP'N. *NOW* CAN I BLAST 'EM?

JOLLI, *JOLLI*-- EASY TO TELL YOU'RE STILL *NEW* AT THIS PIRACY GAME.

ONE DAY SOON, WE MAY *AGAIN* ENCOUNTER MR. SOLO AND HIS FURRY FRIEND, WHEN THEY HAVE *ANOTHER* INTERESTING CARGO.

THAT WILL *HARDLY* BE TRUE IF WE *ELIMINATE* THEM, WILL IT?

LET'S GO, LADS!

HRAK HRAK

WELL, THERE IT *GOES*, CHEWIE.

WITHOUT THAT TREASURE, *JABBA*'LL SOON HAVE A *PRICE* ON OUR HEADS THAT'LL MAKE US THE TARGET OF EVERY *BOUNTY-HUNTER* THIS SIDE OF *AQUILAE*.

WE'VE GOT *NO CHOICE* NOW; WE'VE GOT TO *LIE LOW* FOR A WHILE, ON ONE OF THOSE *RIM WORLDS* I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

JABBA'S REACH WON'T BE *THAT* LONG... *MAYBE*.

YEAH, SURE. I'M *GLAD* WE'RE STILL ALIVE *TOO*... I GUESS.

ADUBA-3 IS ON RELATIVELY FEW STAR-CHARTS... AND WITH GOOD REASON.

SOME YEARS BACK, IT WAS THE SITE OF A CHROMIUM RUSH WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE LARGELY FALSE ALARM... THE RESULT OF MINE-SEEDING BY GREEDY SPECULATORS.

SINCE THEN, THOSE STAR-TRADERS WHO STILL REMEMBER IT MOSTLY TURN UP THEIR NOSES AT THE MENTION OF ITS NAME.

STILL, FOR A PAIR OF WEARY SPACE-PILOTS TEMPORARILY ON THE LAM...

...EVEN ITS BARREN WASTES HAVE CERTAIN POSSIBILITIES.

WELL, HERE WE ARE, CHEWIE -- HOME SWEET HOME FOR A WHILE...

...THAT IS, IF THE LOCALS HAVE ANY EMPLOYMENT FOR A COUPLE OF INCOGNITO PLANET-JUMPERS.

GUH-RUNK!

YEAH, I KNOW! THERE'S USUALLY MORE PEOPLE AROUND IN A SPACEPORT TOWN LIKE THIS...

AND THAT SEEMS TO BE THE REASON WE DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY BEFORE.

SOME KIND OF COMMOTION GOING ON NEAR THE LOCAL CANTINA!

APPARENTLY THE GUYS ON THE GROUND ARE UNHAPPY WITH THAT INSECT-GUY UP ON THE BANTHA ABOUT SOMETHING.

HEY! ISN'T THE BUGGIE DRESSED LIKE SOME KIND OF PRIEST?

CAN'T IDENTIFY THE EXACT RELIGION; I GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE SKIPPED SO MUCH SUNDAY SCHOOL AS A KID.

WHAT SAY WE GET A LITTLE CLOSER?

CLOTH OR NO-- PULL THAT BUGGIE DOWN FROM THERE!

HE AIN'T PUTTING NO BORGS IN OUR MOUND!

YEAH! IF HE LIKES BORGS SO MUCH, LET 'IM DRAG THE CARCASS BACK TO THE MISSION!

EVEN AS SOLO AND CHEWBACCA APPROACH, THE INSECT-LIKE ALIEN DESCENDS FROM THE BANTHA'S BROAD, HAIRY BACK...

BUT, BEFORE HE CAN SPEAK--

--ONE OF THE ANGRY CROWD SEEKS TO LAY HANDS ON HIM.

THAT PROVES TO HAVE BEEN AN ERROR IN JUDGMENT.

THRAP!

HOWEVER, BEFORE HE CAN RE-MOUNT HIS HUGE BEAST OF BURDEN--

I'VE GOT 'IM, BOYS!

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, CHEWIE--BUT, IF YOU'LL JOIN ME--

ROUGH HIM UP!

SHOW 'IM WE MEAN BUSINESS!

GRONK

YEAH, I KIND'A THOUGHT YOU WOULD!

THE SPACEPORT ALIENS ARE **SPACERS**, MOSTLY... A FEW MEDIOCRE **PILOTS**, THE REST **NAVIGATORS** OR **CREWMEN** IN BETWEEN ASSIGNMENTS.

NONE OF THEM HAS HAD THE EXPERIENCE IN **HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT** AND GENERAL **ROUGH-HOUSING** THAT HAN SOLO HAS...

AND MOST **CERTAINLY** NONE OF THEM HAS EVER STOOD UP TO A **WOOKIEE.**

IN SHORT ORDER, THE UNEQUAL BATTLE IS **OVER**...

...AND **HAN SOLO** TURNS TO THE SHAKEN **INSECTOID** BEFORE HIM:

YOU **ALL RIGHT**, PERA?*

YES, MY FI.*

THEY MEANT ME **NO HARM**... NOT **REALLY**. PLEASE, DO NOT **HURT** THEM!

I DON'T BEAR ANY GRUDGES, PERA...

*PERA IS HIGH GALACTIC FOR **MALE PARENT**; FI MEANS **MALE CHILD**. --ROY.

...BUT, THEY'D BETTER GIVE MY FRIEND **CHEWBACCA** A WIDE BERTH FOR A WHILE!

GUH-RARRR

IF THERE'S A MANLIKE ALIEN ANYWHERE IN THE **GALAXY** THAT CAN TAKE ON AN **ANGRY WOOKIEE** AND LIVE TO TELL THE TALE, I'VE SURE NEVER **SEEN** HIM!

AND, EVIDENTLY, I'M NOT *ABOUT* TO!

NOW, PERA, WHAT'S THE *DISPUTE*? AND WHO'S THE GUY ON THE *TRAVOIS*?

HE IS A *BORG* WHO DIED LAST NIGHT.

YOU KNOW THE *TERM*, I'M SURE...

HALF *HUMAN*...HALF MECHANICAL *DROID*.

YET, THE *MAN* HALF OF HIM HAD A *SOUL*... OR SO *MY* FAITH BELIEVES.

THE *SPACERS*, AS YOU KNOW, HAVE AN AGE-OLD *PREJUDICE* AGAINST ANY KIND OF *ROBOT*, AND REFUSE TO LET HIM BE BURIED ON *SPACERS' HILL*, AS IS HIS *RIGHT* AS A ONETIME PILOT.

WILL *YOU* BURY HIM THERE, OUTSIDE THE CITY?

LISTEN, PERA, WE'VE DONE *ENOUGH* FOR ONE--

HE HAD THIS SMALL *SACK OF COINS* UPON HIS PERSON WHEN HE DIED.

BY *TRADITION*, IT BELONGS TO THE ONE WHO *BURIES* HIM.

BORG, OL' BUDDY...

YOU JUST BOUGHT YOURSELF A *LAST RESTING-PLACE*.

Y'KNOW, CHEWIE, *SPACERS* ARE A *WEIRD* LOT.

HALF OF 'EM HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING MORE IN *COMMON* WITH EACH OTHER THAN THE SAME NUMBER OF *EYES*... MAYBE NOT EVEN *THAT*.

BUT SHOW 'EM A GUY WHO'S PART *MACHINE* LIKE THE *SHIPS* THEY FLY, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY'RE ONE BIG HAPPY BIGOTED *FAMILY*.

OH WELL... ALL THE BETTER FOR *US*, EH?

AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO *GET BY* HERE FOR A WHILE, IF WE DON'T GET A *LASER-BOLT* IN OUR BACK-SIDES.

URNG!

YEAH, I *KNOW*... BUT AT LEAST THEY'RE FOLLOWING US AT A *DISTANCE*, AND NOT REACHING FOR THEIR *BLASTERS*.

JUST KEEP LEADING THE BANTHA AT A *NICE, EVEN PACE*, AND COULD BE WE'LL GET THRU THIS WITHOUT A *FLARE-UP*.

PLEASANT HOPES, HAN SOLO...

*AND, IN TRUTH, **NONE** OF THE SPACERS WOULD DARE MAKE A **FACE-TO-FACE** CHALLENGE...*

*BUT, A **STONE** HURLED FROM WITHIN A **CROWD** IS ANOTHER MATTER!*

NRLK!

OWWW--!

GO ON BACK WHERE YOU *CAME* FROM, YOU DIRTY *BORG-LICKERS!*

GRRG!

EASY, CHEWIE! YOU MAY BE AS STRONG AS A WHOLE FREIGHTER-LOAD OF *SWAMP-CATS*, BUT WE'RE STILL *OUTNUMBERED* TEN TO ONE!

JUST *LOOK FIERCE*, KEEP YOUR *GUN* LOW--

--AND MAYBE THEY'LL LET US *PASS*.

*;ULP!; AND THEN AGAIN-- **MAYBE NOT!***

*NEXT INSTANT, EVEN AS HAN SOLO IS **YANKED** BY A TALL SPACER FROM HIS HIGH PERCH--*

*--THE **INSECTOID PRIEST** IS BACK, THOUGH WHERE HE **CAME** FROM, NONE COULD **SAY**.*

SPACER AFTER SPACER **GOES DOWN** BEFORE CHEWBACCA'S FURRY FISTS--

ROORG!

--YET, BECAUSE THE WOOKIEE **PULLS HIS PUNCHES**, SOME OF THEM GET BACK **UP** AGAIN.

AND, MEAN-WHILE--

SO FAR, SO **GOOD!**

THEY'RE **MAD**, BUT THEY'RE NOT **KILLERS!** AND, AS LONG AS THEY DON'T TRY ANYTHING **LETHAL**, THERE'S STILL A CHANCE WE CAN--

WHOOPS! LOOKS LIKE I SPOKE **TOO SOON!**

THERE'S ONE IN **EVERY CROWD!** NO WAY I CAN DODGE THAT **SIKURDIAN BATTLE-AXE**--

WHTT

--SO I DON'T HAVE ANY **CHOICE!**

CHEWBACCA, HOWEVER, IS NOT AS **SQUEAMISH** AS HIS CORELLIAN CAPTAIN--

AND, AS SOON AS HE SEES **FIRST BLOOD**--

--HIS **WOOKIEE NATURE** MANIFESTS ITSELF IN ITS **USUAL MANNER.**

FRZZZZ

OKAY, CHEWIE-- THESE SPACE-HAPPY CLOWNS STARTED THIS LITTLE CLAMBAKE...

LET'S END IT FOR 'EM FAST, SO WE CAN GET BACK TO WORK, HUH?

GRURG!

URK!

BEHIND ME!? WHERE?? I DON'T--

ZIK!

OH, NOW I SEE!

THANKS, CHEWIE.

I OWE YOU ONE.

A CORELLIAN-BORN MERCENARY WHO'S BEEN EVERYTHING FROM A SMUGGLER TO VIRTUALLY A STAR-PIRATE HIMSELF--

A SEVEN-FOOT ANTHROPOID WHO HAILS FROM A WORLD WHERE VIOLENCE IS SUCH AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE THAT THERE ARE FIFTEEN SEPARATE WORDS FOR IT IN THE WOOKIEE VOCABULARY--

--AND A WARM-HEARTED PRIEST OF A SPECIES WHICH DOES NOT EVEN HAVE A HEART, AS HUMANS UNDERSTAND THE TERM.

TOGETHER THEY STAND--SIDE BY SIDE, THEN BACK TO BACK IN TURNS--

--THEIR WEAPONS MAKING A BITTER SWATH IN THE MULTI-COLORED, VARI-SHAPED MASS WHICH SWIRLS AND EBBS AROUND THEM--

--UNTIL THE FIRST OF THE SPACERS TURNS TAIL TO FLEE--

--TO BE SWIFTLY JOINED BY OTHERS OF HIS ILK.

NOT JUST YET, CHEWIE...

DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN YET!

THEY COULD STILL TRY TO PICK US OFF FROM THE SHADOWS--

--THOUGH I DON'T THINK THAT'S QUITE WHAT THEY'VE GOT ON THEIR MIND.

HROOG!

YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

THEY'VE HAD IT.

NOW, WHERE'S THE PERA? I DON'T--

OH.

BEGONE, DEFILERS OF THE SACRED WAY!

SMYT!

WELL, PERA, LOOKS LIKE WE'VE WON THAT BORG'S RIGHT TO BE BURIED ON SPACERS' HILL.

ONLY THING IS, SOME OF THE STAR-HOPPERS SPRAWLED AROUND HERE ARE GOING TO BE JOIN-ING HIM, COME THE MORROW.

VIOLENCE EVER BEGETS VIOLENCE, OUTWORLDER.

AS MY HOLY-BOOK SAYS: "FOR EVERY SIN THERE IS AN EQUAL AND POSITIVE RETRIBUTION."

IF THAT'S *TRUE*, *PERA*, THEN I KNOW AN ARMORED CREEP NAMED *DARTH VADER* WHO'S IN FOR ONE HELLUVA *PAY-OFF* ONE OF THESE FINE DAYS.

BUT ANYWAY, THAT LITTLE VICTORY SHOULD HAVE *SOLVED* ALL OUR PROBLEMS, RIGHT?

ALL BUT *ONE*, MY *FI*.

ONE OF THE SPACERS' *LASER-BLASTS* FORTUNATELY MISSED ITS *TWO-LEGGED TARGET*...

...BUT STRUCK THE HAPLESS *BANTHA*, INSTEAD.

AND A *BORG* IS FAR *HEAVIER* THAN A HUMAN, BECAUSE HE IS *HALF METAL*.

IT WILL BE *DIFFICULT* NOW FOR US TO TRANSPORT HIM TO HIS *BURIAL PLACE*.

DIFFICULT FOR *YOU*, MAYBE-- BUT NOT FOR *US*, EH, CHEWIE?

THAT'S IT, OLD CHUM-- DON'T *DROP* IT NOW! SHOW A LITTLE *RESPECT*.

HRUNK!

YES, I *KNOW* I'M NOT THE ONE WHO HAS TO CARRY IT UP THE HILL...

...BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO PLAY BRING-UP-THE-REAR, RIGHT?

HRUNK!

YOU ALREADY SAID THAT!

WITH THE INSECTOID IN THE LEAD, THE STRANGE ASSEMBLAGE PROCEEDS SLOWLY UP THE CURVE OF THE BURIAL MOUND...

...TO A PLACE WHERE THE DREAMS OF MEN AND MONSTERS ALIKE HAVE ALL COME TO THE SAME, SAD END COUNTLESS LIGHT YEARS DISTANT FROM THE WORLDS THEY ONCE CALLED HOME.

AND, IF THE GODS OF SPACE ARE WATCHING OVER THE PRIEST'S EERIE, CHIRP-LIKE CHANTING, THEY GIVE NO SIGN.

BUT THEN, THEY NEVER PROMISED THEY WOULD.

WHEW!! THAT WAS THIRSTY WORK!

I GUESS YOU WOULDN'T KNOW, PERA, BUT IF THERE'S A CANTINA--

THE THIRD STRUCTURE ON THE LEFT PAST THE TOWN CIRCLE, MY FI.

I SUSPECT YOU'LL HAVE NO TROUBLE THERE, SINCE YOU DID ALL YOU DID IN A FAIR FIGHT.

THE SPACERS RESPECT THAT.

SOON AFTERWARD, IN THE SPACEPORT BELOW...

CHNOOP

I COULDN'T AGREE WITH YOU MORE, PAL...

I COULD REALLY GET TO LIKE IT HERE, TOO!

RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I THINK WE COULD STILL USE A BIT MORE GOOD WILL FROM THE CLIENTELE.

BARTENDER! ANOTHER ROUND FOR THE HOUSE--

--ON ME AND MY WOOKIEE FRIEND HERE!

AND HOW ABOUT *YOU*, LITTLE LADY?

WHAT'S A NICE GIRL LIKE *YOU* DOING IN A PLACE LIKE *THIS*--

--I *HOPE!*

WHY DON'T WE TAKE A WALK AND *SWAP LIFE-STORIES*, STAR-HOPPER?

YOU TELL ME *YOURS*...

...AND I'LL TELL YOU *MINE*.

WHY *NOT*? AFTER ALL, *WHO KNOWS*--?

SOME OF IT MAY EVEN TURN OUT TO BE *TRUE*.

YOU BE *OKAY* HERE ALL BY YOUR *LONE-SOME*, CHEWIE?

GRUNK!

I STAND *CORRECTED*.

NOW, WHERE'D *LITTLE GIRL BLUE* GO? OH WELL...

I'M SURE SHE'LL-- *HUH*?

YOU THREE LOOK LIKE YOU WANT TO *SAY* SOMETHING TO ME. *OUT* WITH IT!

WE HAVE A *PROPOSITION* TO PUT FORTH TO YOU, HONORED *OFFWORLDER*.

IT IS A MOST *AGREEABLE* PROPOSAL, WE ASSURE YOU...

...*UNLESS*, OF COURSE, YOU HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE AVERSION TO *DYING*...!

?

NEXT ISSUE: **TROUBLE IN PARADISE!**

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS

EXTRA!

IN THIS ISSUE: THE DEADLY MISSION OF LUKE SKYWALKER!

EIGHT AGAINST A WORLD!

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

ROY THOMAS & HOWARD CHAYKIN JOIN IN WELCOMING ABOARD TOM PALMER AS EMBELLISHER IN RESIDENCE!

T. PALMER, colors

J. COSTANZA, letters

ARCHIE GOODWIN, CONSULTING EDITOR

EIGHT FOR ADUBA-3

CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS, RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

A QUIET INTERLUDE AT THE LOCAL CANTINA:

NOW, WOULD YOU *THREE GUYS* MIND RUNNING THAT PAST ME *AGAIN*?

YOU SAY YOU'VE GOT A *JOB* FOR ME--IF I DON'T HAVE AN "*UNFORTUNATE AVERSION TO DYING*"?

SORRY, KIDS, BUT THAT DOESN'T SOUND *QUITE* LIKE WHAT I WAS *LOOKING F--*

UH OH! NOW WHAT??

WHAT'S *YOUR* BEEF, TALL-DARK-AND-UGLY-AS-SIN?

AZOORA IS MINE, SEE--AND YOU'D BETTER KEEP AWAY FROM HER!

AZOORA!? I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE--

THE BLUE-SKINNED GIRL YOU WERE TALKING TO BEFORE, THAT'S WHO.

LOOK, PAL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE SHE WENT.

SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST WADDLE ALONG BEFORE MY WOOKIEE FRIEND, CHEWBACCA, TAKES YOU APART?

BAH! I'M NOT AFRAID OF ANY SKINNY BAG OF FUR.

YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT, STAR-HOPPER!

FRANKLY, I DON'T WANT IT...

...SO YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK!

KRAK!

WELL? ANY MORE TRICKS?

OKAY, SO A WOOD CHAIR WON'T HURT YOU.

ALL RIGHT, CHEWIE-- I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO--

CHEWIE--?

NOW WHERE IN BLAZES DID HE--

KUPOOM

--GO?

WH--? THAT WAS MY DRINK YOU JUST KNOCKED OVER, SKY-BOY!
DON'T BLAME ME, PIG-FACE-- BLAME HIM!
HEY! YOU TRYIN' TO GET SMART WITH MY GIRL-FRIEND?
PLAT!
GIRL FRIEND!? IT'S GETTING SO YOU CAN'T TELL ONE SEX FROM THE OTHER IN THESE SPACEPORT TOWNS. I--
OH OH! DUCKING TIME AGAIN!
SKTOK!
OKAY... NOW YOU CAN LOOK!
THAT YOU BACK THERE, CHEWIE? I KNEW I SAW A BIG HULKING SHADOW BEHIND--
BAM!
:ULP!: WRONG AGAIN, SOLO!
THOOK!

GRONK?

CHEWIE!

I WAS JUST *THINKING* ABOUT YOU.

LISTEN, THE *NATIVES* ARE GETTING A BIT *RESTLESS*, SO MAYBE WE BETTER--

YOU DON'T GO *NOWHERE*, PINKIE--

--NOT *STAND-ING UP*, ANYWAYS!

WATCH HIM, CHEWIE! HE'S HAD TOO MUCH *NIKTA* TO DRINK.

SO, YOU THINK THAT OVERGROWN *HAIR SHIRT'LL* PROTECT YOU, DO YA?

WELL, SHORTIE, AFTER I LAY *HIM* OUT, I'M GONNA--

HUH?

THROOM!

WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU, WOOKIEE?

WHUMP!

DON'T YA KNOW ENOUGH TA LAY DOWN AN' *PLAY DEAD* WHEN I *HIT* YA?

RR-

N-NOW *LOOK*, PAL... MAYBE WE SHOULD *TALK THIS OVER...!*

SHBOOM!

AS SWIFTLY AS IT BEGAN, THE BATTLE ROYAL IS OVER...

AND, AS IS USUAL IN SUCH CASES, THE VICTORS ARE THE ONES WHO ARE LEFT STANDING.

GRRONK!

NO GRUDGES NOW, OLD BUDDY.

AFTER ALL, WE WON, DIDN'T WE?

NOW, WHAT SAY WE GO SEE WHY THOSE PEASANT TYPES JUST OFFERED US A JOB?

WE COULD USE ONE Y'KNOW.

NOW, FRIEND, AS YOU WERE SAYING, BEFORE WE WERE SO CRUDELY INTERRUPTED...?

WE ARE LOWLY FARMERS FROM A VILLAGE IN THE POORER PARTS OF THIS PLANET...

THAT'S WHAT I CALL STARTING OUT AT THE BOTTOM!

BEG PARDON, SIR?

SORRY. GUESS I'LL HAVE TO SHELVE MY SENSE OF HUMOR FOR A WHILE, EH, CHEWIE?

ANYWAY ...WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, LITTLE FRIEND?

MY NAME IS RAMIZ, AND I WAS SELECTED TO COME HERE WITH THE OTHERS TO FIND... I DO NOT KNOW QUITE HOW TO SAY IT...

...A CHAMP-ION... A PRO-TECTOR, SO TO SPEAK!

SO FAR, I LIKE THE SOUND OF IT.

HRUK?

I WAS JUST GETTING TO THAT, CHEWIE.

MY FURRY FIRST MATE WANTS TO KNOW JUST WHO OR WHAT YOU WANT US TO PROTECT YOU FROM.

HE IS A DEVIL... HE AND HIS MEN!

UH OH! SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE OUT-NUMBERED BEFORE WE EVEN START.

BUT, WE ARE DIRELY IN NEED OF A CHAMPION, MASTER SOLO...

"... SOMEONE WHO WILL DEFEND US FROM THE *CLOUD-RIDERS*, AND FROM *SERJI-X*!

"HE AND HIS MEN-- *OUTLAWS* WHO LIVE IN THE MIST-SHROUDED *HILLS* OUTSIDE OUR VILLAGE-- COME FORTH EACH YEAR AT ABOUT THIS TIME TO *EXACT TRIBUTE* FROM US, WHO HAVE BARELY ENOUGH TO FEED *OURSELVES*!

"AYE, THAT IS THE NAME OF THEIR LEADER-- *SERJI-X ARROGANTUS* --THE *ARROGANT ONE*!

"THEY STAMPEDE OUR *BANTHAS*, WHICH WE RAISE FOR *FOOD* AND *TRANSPORTATION*...

"IF WE TRY TO *RESIST*, THEY WILL *BURN* OUR MEAGRE CROPS, WHICH SCARCELY FEED US WELL IN THE *BEST* OF YEARS...

"AND THEY CARRY OFF OUR *WIVES*, OUR *DAUGHTERS*... MERELY TO *AMUSE* THEMSELVES!"

I HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE *DEVILS*, MASTER SOLO... AND THERE IS NO *OTHER* WORD THAT FITS THEM SO *WELL*.

WE HAVE *LITTLE MONEY*, BUT WE CAN OFFER YOU *FOOD*... AND *SHELTER*.

YOU *MUST* HELP US, MASTERS... OR OUR VILLAGE WILL SOON *CEASE TO BE*!!

YEAH, THAT'D BE A REAL *LOSS* TO THE *GALAXY*, ALL RIGHT!

BEG *PARDON?*

SKIP IT!

OKAY, WE'LL *TAKE* THE JOB.

BUT, I WANT TO RECRUIT A FEW *MORE* OF THESE DOWN-ON-THEIR-LUCK *SPACERS* BEFORE WE LEAVE FOR YOUR VILLAGE.

SPREAD THE *WORD*, HUH?

YES, MASTER SOLO...!

ADUBA-3'S FOURTH-CLASS SUN HAS SCARCELY SET WHEN A PROCESSION OF ALIENS BEGINS TO FORM A LINE OUTSIDE AN UPSTAIRS DOOR IN THE RUN-DOWN CANTINA.

WHY THEY CAME TO ADUBA-3 IN THE FIRST PLACE, OR WHERE THEY CAME FROM, NO MAN CAN TRULY SAY...

...LEAST OF ALL HAN SOLO, WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE ANYBODY.

NOK NOK

NEXT!

WELL, WE'VE SEEN *TEN SPACERS* SO FAR, AND UP TILL NOW *NOT ONE* OF THEM KNEW WHICH END OF THE *BLASTER* WAS UP.

I KINDA HOPED YOU'D BE *DIFFERENT*... BUT I DON'T EVEN SEE YOUR *GUN*.

MY NAME IS *HEDJI*... AND I NEVER *USE* ONE.

SORRY, PAL, BUT THE KIND OF GUY *WE'RE* LOOKING FOR DEFINITELY *ISN'T* ONE WHO SPECIALIZES IN *THUMB-WRESTLING*.

SEND IN THE *NEXT* GUY, WILL YOU?

GURK!

HUH? YOU STILL *HERE*? I THOUGHT I SAID--

I *HEARD* YOU. BUT I STILL WANT THE *JOB*...FOR REASONS I'D RATHER NOT GO *INTO*.

LOOK, I'M A BIT PRESSED FOR *TIME* RIGHT NOW, SO GET TO THE *POINT*, OKAY?

WHATEVER YOU SAY!

ZIK ZIK ZIK

OPEN MOUTH.. INSERT BOOT!

QUILLS!

FFT! FFT!

I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE ANY OF YOU SPINERS LEFT IN THE GALAXY.

FTT!

ANYWAY... YOU'RE HIRED!

SO GLAD TO HEAR IT.

BUT, MY SOURCES WERE A BIT VAGUE AS TO WHAT I'M BEING HIRED FOR.

LATER... WHEN I'VE FILLED MY QUOTA.

MEAN-WHILE, DON'T STRAY TOO FAR AWAY...

BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND... DON'T GET TOO CLOSE EITHER.

NEXT!

HARRUKK!

HELLO, SOLO.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

I'VE GOT EYES, CHEWIE!

OUR OLD BUDDY AMAIZA-- DEN-MOTHER OF THE BLACK-HOLE GANG!

I THOUGHT THE EMPIRE GUNNED DOWN THE LOT OF YOU, OVER DELPHON WAY.

OBVIOUSLY... THEY MISSED.

AND, DIDN'T I HEAR SOMETHING ABOUT YOU OWING JABBA THE HUT ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY YOUR OWN SPICE-MINE?

MAYBE YOU HEARD WRONG, TOO.

ALL RIGHT, LADY... YOU'RE IN.

WHY, SOLO... DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE IF I'VE STILL GOT A WAY WITH A BLASTER?

ALTHOUGH, I MUST *WARN* YOU...

...I TEND TO COME A *LOT CLOSER* THAN THOSE *QUILLS* STUCK IN THE *WALL* DID!

SEEMS *EVERYBODY* AROUND HERE TONIGHT IS MAKING A *POINT.*

TRY NOT TO *SHOOT UP* ANY OF OUR OTHER PROSPECTS ON THE WAY *OUT,* OKAY?

I'LL DO MY *BEST.*

I'M SURE YOU *WILL.*

NEXT!

NOW WHO THE--?

I AM *DON-WAN KIHOTAY...*

...OF THE *JEDI KNIGHTS!*

WHAT'RE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT, OLD MAN? THE *JEDI* HAVE BEEN *OUT-LAWED* SINCE THE RISE OF THE *EMPIRE...!*

NONETHELESS, I AM A *TRUE JEDI*... MASTER OF *"THE FORCE,"* AND WIELDER OF THE *LIGHTSABRE.*

THUS, IT IS MY *SACRED DUTY* TO TRAVEL THE GALAXY, CHAMPIONING THE CAUSES OF *PEACE* AND *JUSTICE.*

I PRAY YOU, LET ME *JOIN* YOU, YOUNG SIR, IN WHATEVER *HOLY MISSION* YOU UNDERTAKE... THAT I MAY CONTINUE TO BE *WORTHY* OF THE NAME OF *JEDI KNIGHT!*

HAKROOO

YEAH, I *KNOW* HE'S CRAZY, CHEWIE... DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE *DARTH VADER* DESTROYED THE JEDI, *YEARS* AGO.

BUT, HE WON'T GET IN THE WAY *TOO* MUCH...!

ALL RIGHT, DON-WAN... YOU'VE *MADE THE TEAM!*

BUT *ONLY* IF YOU SWEAR TO *UPHOLD THE REPUBLIC,* AND SERVE AS *DEFENDER OF THE RIGHT,* AND SO FORTH.

I DO SO *SWEAR,* YOUNG SIR!

THEN *RISE*...BUT WATCH IT WITH THAT *LIGHTSABRE.*

MY ETERNAL THANKS, YOUNG SIR! DON-WAN KIHOTAY WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN.

THAT'S PEACHY! NOW MOVE IT, POPS-- WE AIN'T GOT ALL NIGHT OUT HERE IN THE LOBBY, Y'KNOW.

OH, WELL, LEASTWAYS I'M NEXT, SO WE CAN FINALLY GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD BEFORE SUN-UP.

OUTTA MY WAY, RODENT! I JUST FOUND OUT THAT NEW GUY IS HIRIN' SPACERS...

AND I WANT SOME MONEY SO'S I CAN GET OFF THIS ROCK!

I AIN'T NO RODENT, CAP'N...

AN' I'M NEXT IN LINE, SO WHY DONTCHA JUST--

WHOMP

:URG!:

YOU MEAN YOU WAS NEXT!

NOW, OPEN UP IN THERE, PAL, AND LET ME--

'SCUZE ME, JUNIOR...

...BUT I REALLY GOTTA INSIST THAT YOU HAUL YOUR WART-COVERED CARCASS BACK TO THE END'A THE LINE, Y'KNOW?

BLAST OFF, RODENT-- OR THERE'S PLENTY MORE FISTS WHERE THAT ONE CAME FROM!

I AIN'T ABOUT TO DOUBT IT, PAL.

BUT, LIKE I SAID BEFORE...

--I AIN'T NO RODENT!

KRG!

KCHOP!

I'M MORE WHAT YA CALL YER BASIC *LEPUS CARNIVORUS*-- A MEAT-EATIN', ROCKET-RIDIN' *RABBIT* TA YOU, JUNIOR!

OH *YEAH*-- AN' GIVE MY *REGARDS* TA THE BOYS IN THE *BAR!*

I *SAW* THAT, RABBIT...

WELL, HOORAY FOR *YOUR* SIDE! YOU MUST'A BEEN EATIN' YOUR *SPACE-CARROTS*... NEVER COULD *STAND* 'EM, MYSELF! I'M--

I *HEARD*: A *MEAT-EATER*... ONE THAT NEEDS A *JOB* RIGHT?

WELL, I AIN'T STANDIN' OUT HERE FOR THE *DECOR.*

YOU GOT *ANOTHER* NAME BESIDES--?

JAXXON. YOU CAN CALL ME *JAX* FOR SHORT...WHICH I *AIN'T.*

OKAY, JAX... I'LL SEND *CHEWBACCA* DOWN FOR YOU AND THE OTHERS LATER.

NOW, SON... WHAT'S A *YOUNGSTER* LIKE YOU DOING IN LINE?

I MEAN, THE *FREE-FOR-ALL* I'VE GOT LINED UP DOESN'T NEED ANOTHER *MASCOT.*

AND THAT *TRACTOR-ROBOT* TREADING HIS WAY UP THE STAIRS BEHIND YOU... HE *YOURS?*

HE SURE *IS!* MY HANDLE'S *JIMM,* BUT I CALL MYSELF THE *STARKILLER KID!*

AND YOU CAN BET I'M GONNA *LIVE UP* TO THAT HANDLE--IF I CAN EVER GET OFF THIS CRUMMY *PLANET.*

WHILE *I,* SIR, AM *FE.9Q...* FAMILIARLY KNOWN AS *EFFIE...*

AND I DON'T BELONG TO *ANYONE...* MOST *ESPECIALLY* NOT TO ANYONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE *STARKILLER KID!*

DON'T PAY HIM ANY *MIND*, SOLO! HE GETS *UPPITTY* SOMETIMES, BUT HE'S REALLY *DEVOTED* TO ME... LIKE A *PET*.

MORE LIKE A *LANDSPEEDER* IS DEVOTED TO THE MAN BEHIND THE *STEERING WHEEL*!

WE CAN *ALWAYS* USE A GOOD *ROBOT*, SON.

BUT GIVE ME THREE GOOD REASONS WHY WE SHOULD TAKE *YOU* ALONG!

AH-HAH!

SHUT UP, EFFIE!

BECAUSE I'VE STUCK ON ADUBA-3 ALL MY *LIFE*, AND IF I DON'T GET *OFF* IT, I'M GONNA GO *NUTS*... THAT'S WHY!

EVER *FIRED* THAT BLASTER AT ANYTHING BIGGER THAN A *SAND-RAT*?

SURE... *LOTS* OF TIMES, AT-- AT--

DUNE-CACTUSES, RIGHT?

WELL, *YEAH*-- BUT JUST GIVE ME A *CHANCE*, AND I'LL--

WHOA! PUT ON YOUR *RETRO-ROCKETS!*

YOU KNOW, YOU REMIND ME OF *ANOTHER* COCKY KID I USED TO KNOW... NAME OF *LUKE SKYWALKER*.

IT HASN'T BEEN ALL THAT LONG SINCE I *SAW* HIM, BUT THINGS WERE MOVING *PRETTY FAST* WHEN I LEFT.

I WONDER WHAT *HE'S* UP TO, RIGHT ABOUT NOW...!

AND, EVEN AS HAN SOLO *MUSES*...

...EVENTS *ARE* MOVING QUICKLY ON THE *FOURTH MOON* OF THE DISTANT PLANET *YAVIN*, UN-NUMBERED LIGHT-YEARS AWAY.

FOR, SINCE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE'S DREADED *DEATH STAR*, THE *REBELS* ON THAT VERDANT WORLD HAVE BEEN ON CONSTANT *VIGIL*...

...THOUGH ONLY A FEW TELLTALE *RECON-TOWERS*, JUTTING UP OUT OF THE THICK JUNGLE, WOULD GIVE THEM *AWAY*.

WHILE, *BENEATH* THE SURFACE OF *YAVIN-4*...

OH, *LUKE*... I WISH ANYONE BUT *YOU* WERE GOING...!

AS DO WE *ALL*, YOUR MAJESTY... BUT, *NO ONE HERE* HAS PROVEN HIMSELF AS GOOD A *STAR-PILOT* AS YOUNG *LUKE*...

AND SKILLED, FAST *FLYING* IS JUST WHAT WE *NEED* AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME!

I WON'T LET YOU *DOWN*, GENERAL DODONNA!

NOW HURRY ABOARD, ARTOO! MASTER LUKE DOESN'T HAVE ALL DAY, YOU KNOW.

BEEP!

ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LETTING YOURSELF IN FOR, LUKE?

I'M NO HERO, PRINCESS...

BUT THEN, IT DOESN'T TAKE A HERO TO FIGURE OUT THAT THE GALACTIC EMPIRE'S GOT TO BE STOPPED...

AND THE REBELS ARE THE ONLY CHANCE WE'VE GOT!

DARTH VADER KNOWS WE'RE HERE NOW...

...SO THREEPIO, ARTOO, AND I HAD BETTER SCOUT UP ANOTHER HIDING-PLACE FOR THE REBELS --FAST!

YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM ME SOONER THAN YOU THINK!

I'M SURE I WILL, LUKE... MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!

AND WITH YOU, PRINCESS!

IF ONLY I COULD BE GOING WITH HIM, GENERAL...!

YOUR PLACE IS HERE, YOUR HIGHNESS... WITH THE REBELS.

PRINCESS LEIA THINKS MOMENTARILY OF HER FATHER, SLAIN BY THE EMPIRE, AS LUKE'S STARSHIP PASSES SWIFTLY FROM SIGHT...

NOW THAT YOUR FATHER IS DEAD, YOU ARE NEEDED BOTH AS A LEADER...AND AS A SYMBOL.

...OUT OF THE GRAVITY FIELDS OF BOTH YAVIN AND ITS FOURTH MOON, AND INTO THE VASTNESS OF SPACE...

...AS HAN SOLO'S MILLENNIUM FALCON DID, NOT SO MANY DAYS BEFORE.

HOW DID I GET MIXED UP IN ALL THIS WAR STUFF, ANYWAY?

I MEAN, MAYBE I GOT LUCKY AND BLEW UP THE DEATH STAR--BUT I'M STILL JUST A FARM-BOY, FRESH OFF A BACKWATER WORLD LIKE TATOOINE!

AW, WHO'RE YOU KIDDIN', SKYWALKER?

YOU KNOW YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE--NOT ONCE YOU LEARNED YOUR FATHER WAS ONE OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS--

--EVEN FOUGHT ALONGSIDE BEN KENOBI IN THE CLONE WARS!

WHAT'S WRONG, MASTER LUKE?

YOU'RE NOT LOOKING AT ALL LIKE YOURSELF, IF I MAY SAY SO.

I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT BEN.

BEN? OH, YOU MEAN OBI-WAN KENOBI...!

HE MAY BE OBI-WAN TO THE REST OF THE GALAXY, THREEPIO.

BUT TO ME, HE WAS BEN... THE GREATEST MAN I EVER KNEW!

HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF... SO THAT WE COULD ESCAPE FROM THE DEATH STAR.

AND I'LL NEVER REST TILL I'VE COME FACE TO FACE WITH DARTH VADER, AND MADE HIM PAY FOR BEN'S DEATH!

"FUNNY, THOUGH," LUKE GOES ON, "LORD VADER WOULD'VE KILLED ME, IF HAN SOLO HADN'T COME TO THE RESCUE...

"GOOD OLD HAN! I GUESS HE'S LIVING IT UP BACK AT MOS EISLEY AT THIS VERY MINUTE, WITH ALL THE TREASURE THE REBELS GAVE HIM...

"...THOUGH HE'S REALLY NOT AS MERCENARY AS HE LETS ON, YOU KNOW.

"YEAH, I WONDER WHAT...

...HE'S UP TO, RIGHT ABOUT NOW...!

PROBABLY HAVING MORE FUN THAN I AM, THAT'S FOR SURE!

WELL, SOLO? YOU GONNA TAKE ME AND MY TRAKKIE ALONG?

SORRY, KID. I GUESS MY MIND JUST WANDERED OFF FOR A SECOND THERE.

ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN COME. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO USE THAT BLASTER LATER.

THAT'S GREAT BY ME, SOLO.

C'MON, EFFIE...

WE'VE GOT SOME PACKING TO DO.

AND I'M THE ONE WHO'LL GET TO DO IT, AS PER USUAL!

DON'T SAY IT, CHEWIE! I KNOW OUR SIX STALWARTS AREN'T ALL THAT MUCH...

HRONK!

BUT BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS.

AT DAWN, OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF THE SPACEPORT TOWN...

WELL THEN THERE NOW! GLAD TO SEE ALL YOUR SMILING FACES THIS BRIGHT MORNING.

HEY, SOLO-- WHERE'S THAT SHIP OF YOURS?

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE BLOWING THIS CRUMMY ROCK!

THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID, STARKILLER... NOT ME! NOW, HERE'S WHAT WE'LL--

HAROO!

I SEE 'EM, CHEWIE.

HEADS UP, SPACERS!

SKYSPEEDERS COMING UP ON YOUR LEFT!

AND UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS... THOSE ARE THE *CLOUD-RIDERS* WE WERE HIRED TO *PROTECT A VILLAGE* FROM!

SOLO! DO YOU WANT US TO--?

EVERYBODY KEEP YOUR *BLASTERS* IN YOUR *HOLSTERS!*

LET *THEM* MAKE THE *FIRST* PLAY!

THERE'S ONLY *SIX* OF 'EM! WE COULD--

DO *WHAT?* HALF OUR GUYS DON'T EVEN *USE BLASTERS.*

NO, IT'S OBVIOUS THEY *HEARD* ABOUT US, AND CAME TO HAVE A LITTLE *TALK...*

...AND IT'S EASY TO SEE *WHO* TIPPED THEM *OFF!*

HELLO, GRUESOME! BEAT UP ANY *LAME BRUSH-MICE* ON YOUR WAY TO TELL THE *BIG BOYS?*

A SPACER'S GOT TO *GET BY* THE BEST WAY HE CAN, STAR-HOPPER!

JUST DON'T PRESS YOUR *LUCK,* OR I'LL--

YOU WILL *NOT* FIRE, WARTO, UNLESS *I* GIVE THE WORD!

WELL, MR. SOLO?

MAY I ASSUME WE MEET UNDER A *FLAG OF TRUCE?*

I'M FRESH OUT OF *BANDANAS,* BUT YOU'RE *ON* SERJI-X...

YOU ARE *SERJI-X ARROGANTUS,* AREN'T YOU?

AN *UNFORTUNATE* TITLE, FOR ONE OF SUCH *DELICATE SENSIBILITIES* AS I.

BUT, WE HAVE COME A *LONG WAY,* SO LET US NOT *BANDY WORDS,* EH?

YOU HAVE BEEN APPROACHED BY *FARMERS* FROM A *CERTAIN VILLAGE...* TO WHICH THEY HAVE ALREADY *RETURNED.*

FORGET YOUR MISSION, I AM PREPARED TO OFFER YOU A *MINIMAL SUM...*

...THOUGH I'M SURE IT WILL BE *MORE* THAN THOSE IGNORANT *PEONS* CAN GIVE YOU.

THEY'RE GIVING US *ALL THEY CAN,* FRIEND... AND THAT'S THE *BEST* PAY I'VE EVER *HAD.*

A SAND-RAT LIKE *YOU* COULD NEVER *BEGIN* TO MATCH THEIR PRICE,

NOW I'VE GOT AN IDEA: HOW'S ABOUT YOU AND YOUR MEN LEAVE THAT VILLAGE ALONE THIS YEAR, AND WE WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE!

SUCH UNEXPECTED BRAVADO--FROM ONE WHO LEADS WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND STAR-SHIP REJECTS!

IF I HAD KNOWN, I WOULD HAVE STAYED IN THE MOUNTAINS --LAUGHING.

YEAH? WELL, TRYING LAUGHING THIS BLASTER OFF, YOU LOUSY BANDIT! I'LL--

AMAIZA!

I READ YOU, SOLO--

--LOUD AND CLEAR!

SO, ALREADY YOU FIGHT AMONG YOURSELVES! AND WITH THIS FORCE YOU TRY TO FRIGHTEN SERJI-X?

THOK!

YOU'VE HAD YOUR SAY, FRIEND. NOW, WHY DON'T YOU AND YOUR CLOUD-RIDERS GO HOME AND PLAY?

BUT I'D STEER CLEAR OF THAT PEASANT VILLAGE, IF I WERE YOU.

YOU ARE NOT ME, STAR-PILOT.

AND IF YOU PERSIST, YOU WILL SOON BE NOTHING...

...JUST ONE MORE LIFELESS CORPSE, TWISTING IN THE DESERT WIND!

URRK!

YEAH, MAYBE WE HAVE BITTEN OFF MORE THAN WE CAN CHEW THIS TIME, OLD BUDDY... I DON'T KNOW.

WELL, LET'S GET MOVING, STAR-HOPPERS!

WE'VE GOT SOME BANTHA-RIDING TO DO!!

NEXT: SHOWDOWN ON A BARREN WORLD!

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

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KEEP FIRING, CHEWIE--ALL OF YOU!

IT'S DO OR DIE--'CAUSE HERE COME THE CLOUD-RIDERS!

YEAH--AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA BE DIE!

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

ROY THOMAS WRITER/EDITOR * HOWARD CHAYKIN & TOM PALMER ILLUSTRATORS * TOM PALMER colorist JOHN COSTANZA letterer * ARCHIE GOODWIN CONSULTING EDITOR * CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS, RELEASED BY 20TH CENTURY-FOX

HROOG!

SHOWDOWN ON A WASTELAND WORLD!

YEAH, I KNOW, CHEWIE... I KNOW!

IT'S TOO QUIET FOR ME, TOO; I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING.

SO NOW I GUESS YER GONNA TALK ALL DAY ABOUT HOW YA DIDN'T WANNA TALK!?

YOU CAN BE REPLACED ON THIS MISSION, Y'KNOW, JAX.

YEAH? WHO BY, SOLO?

LOOKS TA ME LIKE YER ALREADY SCRAPIN' THE BOTTOM OF A LOW BARREL JUST TO DIG UP THIS GROUP!

HE'S *RIGHT*, SOLO--AND YOU *KNOW* IT!

HOW'D YOU GET *INTO* THIS MESS, ANYHOW--LEADING *CHEWBACCA* AND *SIX BASICALLY-SCRUFFY SPACERS* INTO WHAT'S BOUND TO BE A BATTLE WITH A BUNCH OF *BANDITS* WHO OUTNUMBER US *FIVE TO ONE*?

I THOUGHT I WAS ALL OVER THAT *IDEALISTIC* NONSENSE; I MEAN, A FEW MONTHS BACK, I WAS *SMUGGLING SPACE* FOR A LOWLIFE NAMED *JABBA THE HUT*.

YOU CAN'T *GET* MUCH LESS IDEALISTIC THAN *THAT*!

THEN, I GOT TANGLED UP WITH *LUKE SKYWALKER* AND *PRINCESS LEIA*--AND I ACTUALLY ENDED UP *TURNING NOBLE* FOR A MINUTE THERE.

'COURSE, I TRIED TO *RE-ESTABLISH* MYSELF IN THE *SPACE MERCENARY* COMMUNITY BY PAYING *JABBA* BACK WHAT I OWED HIM--ONLY TO GET AMBUSHED BY *SPACE-PIRATES*--

--WHO TOOK THE *TREASURE* LEIA'S REBELS GAVE US, AND LEFT US WITH NOTHING BUT THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON* AND THE *PRICE* JABBA'S PUT ON OUR HEADS!

"YEAH, THAT'S HOW CHEWIE AND I WOUND UP ON THIS HELLHOLE CALLED *ADUBA-3*, ALL RIGHT--AGREEING TO PROTECT A BUNCH OF PEASANTS FROM A *BANDIT* TYPE NAMED *SERJI-X*.

"FAR AS I CAN SEE, THIS JOB'S NOT GOING TO *PAY* US ANYTHING MORE THAN *ALL THE CACTUS WE CAN EAT*...

"AND WE HAD TO GO THRU A *BARROOM BRAWL* OR TWO TO GET THE JOB, AT *THAT*!

"AND THE GUYS I *SIGNED ON* TO HELP US! I MUST 'VE BEEN CHEWING *LUNA-WEED!*

"*DON-WAN KIOTI*, CRAZY OLD COOT WHO THINKS HE'S THE *LAST OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS*--

"*JAXXON*-- A SIX-FOOT *RABBIT* WHO GNAWS ON HAMBONES INSTEAD OF CARROTS--

"*HEDJI*, ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING *SPINERS*-- WELL, HE THROWS A MEAN *QUILL*, AT LEAST--

"AND *AMAIZA*, WELL-- I'VE SEEN HER SHOOT THE ANTENNAE OFF A *JI-ANT* AT 600 YARDS!

"DON'T KNOW *WHAT* POSSESSED ME TO BRING *JIMM*, WHO WANTS ME TO CALL HIM THE *STAR-KILLER KID*--UNLESS IT'S BECAUSE HE'S A *NATIVE*--

"BESIDES, HIS ROBOT *EFFIE* MIGHT BE USEFUL TO US.

ONLY THING IS, I DON'T KNOW *HOW* THOSE SIX WILL *HOLD UP* IF *SERJI-X* TRIES TO AMBUSH US BEFORE WE GET TO THE PEASANTS' *VILLAGE*.

MAYBE I SHOULD'VE REMEMBERED THAT MY LAST NAME IS *SOLO*, AND--

KID! THIS IS *YOUR* PLANET! WHAT'RE THOSE *BIG BIRDS* FLYING FAST TOWARD US?

NOT BIRDS, SOLO! THEY'RE CALLED *HIGH-HOUNDS*... AND THEY'RE BLOOD-THIRSTY *SCAVENGERS*.

THEY'LL PICK THE PEASANTS' CROPS *BARE*, IF WE DON'T *STOP* 'EM!

LET'S GO GET 'EM!

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO *ASK!*

GRUNK!

WELL, WE MIGHT AS WELL BE KILLED BY THINGS WITH *FEATHERS* AS BANDITS WITH *BLASTERS*.

COME ON, YOU STAR-HOPPERS--

NEXT MOMENT, THE EARTH LITERALLY TREMBLES BENEATH THE RACE OF RAMPAGING BANTHAS--

--AS UP AHEAD, A NUMBER OF THE PLANET'S HUMAN INHABITANT'S ARE BEING BESIEGED BY SHRIEKING, QUASI-HUMAN MONSTERS ON THE WING--

NOR DID ANY MERE SCARECROW EVER SUFFICE AGAINST SUCH BLOODTHIRSTY SCAVENGERS AS THESE!

SKRAWW

YET, IF STRAW MEN WOULD PROVE USELESS AGAINST CREATURES WHICH FEED ON THE MAIZE-STALKS WHICH ARE ADU-BA-3'S STAPLE CROP...

SK

--THERE ARE OTHER WAYS.

EEE

ZIK!

OKAY, GUYS! NOW WE KNOW THOSE BIRDIES AREN'T IMMUNE TO A WELL-AIMED BLASTER.

TIME TO GET IN SOME TARGET PRACTICE WHILE WE'RE WAITING FOR SERJI-X AND HIS BOYS!

THUS, GUNS BLAZING, THE AMAZING EIGHT WADE INTO THE VERY MIDST OF THE UNEVEN FRAY--

ZIK

ZIK

--AND PROCEED TO UNBALANCE IT IN A BRAND NEW WAY!

AMAIZA, ONCE A MEMBER OF THE DREADED BLACK-HOLE GANG, IS WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE IN SIX STAR-SYSTEMS...

...AND IT ISN'T FOR THE WAY SHE THREADS A NEEDLE.

MEANWHILE, JAXXON--JAX FOR SHORT, WHICH HE ISN'T--BRINGS DOWN A HIGH-HOUND WITH EACH OF THE GUNS HE WIELDS.

AS FOR THE SPINER CALLED HEDJI, WHO REFRAINS FROM USING A BLASTER AT ALL...

...HE HAS BUT TO FLEX HIS MUSCLES IN A PRECISE, PRE-DETERMINED WAY...

...TO TURN THE FOREMOST OF THE MARAUDING MAN-HAWKS INTO A FORMERLY LIVING PIN-CUSHION!

YAAK!

AS FOR "THE LAST OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS"...

FIE UPON YOU, FOUL FEATHERY FIEND--

IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE, LET THIS PLANET BE CLEANSED OF SUCH FILTH AS YOU AND YOUR BRETHREN!

I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU JUST SAID, OLD MAN-- BUT I'M WITH YOU IN SPIRIT!

WHILE I DO ALL THE ACTUAL WORK...

ZRIK!

...AS PER USUAL.

POW!

Y'KNOW AMAIZA-- WHEN THIS BABY-SITTIN' MISSION'S OVER, HOWZABOUT YOU AN' ME TEAMIN' UP?

I GOT A HUNCH WE COULD MAKE BEAUTIFUL BLASTER-MUSIC TOGETHER.

NO THANKS, BUCK-TOOTH!

NO OFFENSE, BUT IF I HUNG AROUND WITH A GUY WHO LOOKS LIKE A BIG GREEN RABBIT, FOLKS MIGHT START TO TALK, AND--

SOLO! OVER THERE TO YOUR RIGHT--!

THANKS, LADY! I SEE HER--

--ONE OF THE LOCALS, BEING CHASED BY A HIGH-HOUND!

EEEE

BUT-- EVEN IF I TAKE HIM OUT AT THIS RANGE, HE'S STILL LIABLE TO CRASH RIGHT INTO HER!

AND, INDEED, THE GIRL HAS ALREADY CLOSED HER EYES-- CONSIGNING HER SOUL TO WHATEVER GODS SHE MAY WORSHIP--

FLAK!

--WHEN, SUDDENLY--

HERE, STONE-FACE! TRY CHEWING ON A LASER BEAM FOR A WHILE!

NOT THAT IT'LL BE TOO EASY WITH NO TEETH--

OR, FOR THAT MATTER --NO HEAD!

OHHH

NEXT MOMENT, THEIR RANKS SORELY DEPLETED, THE GROTESQUE SCAVENGERS TAKE TO THE AIR ONCE MORE...

...AND, IN A FEW SECONDS, ARE LOST TO SIGHT.

I HOPE SERJI-X AND HIS CLOUD-RIDERS GIVE UP AS--

WELL THEN THERE NOW! THINGS ARE LOOKING UP ON ADUBA-3!

I--I THANK YOU, KIND STRANGER, FOR RESCUING ME-- BUT, I DON'T UNDERSTAND--

YOU WILL, LADY-- IF WE STICK AROUND LONG ENOUGH.

MAYBE THIS PLACE IS WORTH SAVING, AFTER ALL.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, AT THE VILLAGE ITSELF...

SORRY WE DIDN'T GET HERE SOONER, PEOPLE... BUT WE HAD A LITTLE TROUBLE GETTING THE SPACEPORT CROWD TO LOAN ME THESE BANTHAS WITH MY STARSHIP AS SECURITY...

AS YOU MAY SUPPOSE, HAN SOLO, WORD OF YOUR COMING PRECEDED YOU.

YOUR DA--? UH, LET ME HELP YOU DOWN, MISS.

NOR COULD YOU HAVE COME AT A MORE OPPORTUNE MOMENT, THAN IN TIME TO SAVE MY DAUGHTER.

I SEE THIS ISN'T THE BEST TIME TO CONTINUE OUR LITTLE DISCUSSION.

HRARK!

NO CRACKS, CHEWIE! OKAY, YOU STAR-HOPPERS...

THESE NICE FOLKS SAY WE CAN STABLE OUR BANTHAS BEHIND THIS BUILDING.

YEAH? I WONDER WHERE THEY'LL STABLE US?

DON'T MAKE FUN OF MY PEOPLE, GREENIE!

REMEMBER-- I WAS BORN IN THIS VILLAGE...EVEN IF I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FORGET IT.

THEN, WHEN THE RELATIVELY SMALL BANTHAS ARE SECURELY TETHERED...

NOW, MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR SOME INTRODUCTIONS, AND A FEW MORE DETAILS ABOUT SERJI-X...?

I AM ONCHO, WHOM THE VILLAGERS HAVE CHOSEN AS THEIR SPOKESMAN.

MY DAUGHTER, WHOM YOU SAVED, IS NAMED MERRI.

I SHALL BE EVER IN YOUR DEBT FOR--

SERVE ME RIGHT FOR GIVING YOU AN OPENING.

ALL RIGHT, "SPRITES"--'CAUSE I'VE GOT TO HAVE SOMETHING TO CALL YOU--LET'S GET TO WORK!

FORGET IT! YOUR EMISSARIES IN THE SPACEPORT PROMISED YOU'D EVENTUALLY PAY US WHAT LITTLE YOU COULD TO PROTECT YOUR VILLAGE, DIDN'T THEY?

LET'S JUST FIGURE THAT WE GOT AN EARLY START.

WELL, PICTURE THAT! HAN SOLO, LAST OF THE RED-HOT SPACE-SMUGGLERS...,

...GOING SOFT OVER A GIRL NOT MUCH BIGGER THAN A WODANIAN WOOD-SPRITE!

WHEN SERJI-X SHOWS UP NEXT TIME, WE WANT TO BE READY FOR HIM!

AMAIZA, DID ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU TALK TOO MUCH?

ONE GUY... ONCE.

LAST I HEARD, HIS WIDOW WAS LIVING IT UP ON BESTINE WITH HIS DEATH-BENEFITS.

SOON...

THEY'RE WILLING AND ABLE, CHEWIE-- BUT WHEN THOSE SKY-BANDITS COME ROARING IN--

--IT'S GONNA TAKE MORE THAN GOOD INTENTIONS TO TURN BACK THOSE BLASTER-HAPPY CLOWNS!

TIME IS AN ALL BUT MEANINGLESS CONCEPT IN THE VAST SEA OF STARS.

YET, IF SUCH A WORD A "MEANWHILE" CAN HAVE ANY RELEVANCE AT ALL, THEN THIS IS WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE SELFSAME MOMENT ON THE FOURTH MOON OF THE DISTANT PLANET YAVIN...

...OR, RATHER, BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE JUNGLE-INFESTED SATELLITE?

I DON'T LIKE IT, GENERAL DODONNA!

WE SHOULD HAVE HEARD FROM LUKE BY NOW!

YOU LIKE THIS YOUNG MAN "LUKE SKYWALKER," DON'T YOU, HIGHNESS?

AS MUCH AS ONE WITH MY RESPONSIBILITES CAN AFFORD TO LIKE ANYONE IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES.

OH, IF ONLY I COULD HAVE GONE WITH HIM AND HIS DROIDS!

LUKE, LUKE-- WHERE ARE YOU??

FOR US, HOWEVER, THE EXIGENCIES OF TIME AND SPACE DO NOT EXIST.

THUS, LET US SKIP LIGHTLY ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE, TO WHERE THE SMALL STARCRAFT OF LUKE SKYWALKER HAS JUST GONE INTO ORBIT AROUND AN UNNAMED PLANET OF THE STAR-SUN DREXEL...

WELL, THREEPIO... ARTOO... THIS IS IT!

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MASTER LUKE, BUT AS YOU KNOW, SPACE TRAVEL IS HARDLY MY SPECIALTY... OR EVEN ANYTHING I LIKE VERY MUCH.

WOULD YOU MIND ELABORATING...?

GLADLY! WE WERE SENT HERE TO FIND A NEW WORLD FOR THE REBELS TO MIGRATE TO, BEFORE DARTH VADER SENDS THE WHOLE IMPERIAL WAR-FLEET AGAINST THEM.

WHREET?

YES, ARTOO... IT DOES SOUND AS IF HE'S FOUND WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR, DOESN'T IT?

YOU BET YOUR CARBON SCORING MARKS I HAVE!

AND THAT'S NOT ALL--

THE TIME'S COME TO BREAK TRANSCEIVER SILENCE LONG ENOUGH TO TELL PRINCESS LEIA ABOUT IT!

OH, DON'T BE SUCH A WORRY-DROID!

BRIEF PERIODS OF INSTANTANEOUS COMMUNICATION WON'T ENDANGER OUR LOCATION...

BREEP BREEP

...NOT SO LONG AS THE ION-SCRAMBLER IS OPERATING TO CONFUSE THE ENEMY.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MASTER LUKE?

THAT'S THE THEORY, THREEPIO. NOW I--

WAIT! I'M RAISING THE REBEL BASE, AND--

PRINCESS! IT'S GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

AND YOU LUKE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

HAVE YOU FOUND A NEW SAFE-HAVEN FOR OUR REBEL FORCE?

TIME IS RUN-NING SHORT.

YEAH, I THINK I HAVE, YOUR HIGH-NESS. IT'S A PLANET IN THE DREXEL SYSTEM, THAT--

NOW WHAT IN BLAZES--?

NO! IT--IT ISN'T POSSIBLE! IT--

LUKE--!

LUKE!?

THE IMAGE IS GONE!

MORE POWER, ENSIGN! YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME MORE RE-CEIVING POWER!

NO USE, YOUR HIGHNESS!

HE'S STOPPED SENDING!

AND THERE'S NO WAY TO RE-ESTABLISH CONTACT FROM THIS END.

WE'VE LOST HIM!

IF WE EVEN KEEP SENDING, SOME STRAY EMPIRE SHIP IS LIABLE TO--

THEN STOP SENDING!

PRINCESS LEIA--WHERE ARE YOU--?

I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I WANTED TO DO IN THE FIRST PLACE--WHAT I WAS TALKED OUT OF DOING.

I'M GOING TO FIND LUKE SKYWALKER--NO MATTER WHAT!!

BOLD WORDS INDEED FOR ONE WHOSE STATION IN LIFE WOULD USUALLY HAVE HER DELIBERATING ON MATTERS OF STATE...

BUT WHILE PRINCESS LEIA CONTEMPLATES JUST HOW TO FIND ONE PERSON LOST IN THE VASTNESS OF SPACE--

--THE TENSION ON ADUBA-3 IS WELLING LIKE A THING ALIVE...

OKAY THEN, YOU MISFITS! IT'S NOT GONNA BE LONG BEFORE THE FIREWORKS START POPPING!

SO YOU WANNA HURRY UP WITH UNLOADING THOSE WEAPONS AN' POWER PACKS?

I DON'T THINK SERJI-X IS GONNA WAIT FOR US!

WAIT, YOUNG MAN! I WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH YOU BEFORE YOU--

NO, GRAND-FATHER! NOT NOW!

HUH? GRAND-FATHER?! LISTEN, OLD MAN--

--IT'S NOT SAFE SNEAKING UP LIKE THAT ON A GUY WITH A TEMPERAMENTAL BLASTER!

LUCKY FOR YOU I HEARD MERRI CALL YOU GRANDPA, OR YOUR OLD AGE MIGHT'A GOT CUT SHORT!

SO WHAT D'YA WANT? BUT MAKE IT QUICK-- 'CAUSE I'M SORTA BUSY RIGHT NOW!

I AM HERE TO TELL YOU THAT THE HELP OF YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS IS NOT NEEDED HERE!

LISTEN, OLD-TIMER! TIME'S A' WASTING, SO...

YOU THINK I AM JESTING, YOUNG MAN! BUT IT HAS BEEN MANY DECADES SINCE I HAVE SPOKE LIGHTLY!

I TELL YOU IN ALL SOBRIETY THAT WE DO NOT NEED YOU OR YOUR ALIEN HORDE TO DRIVE THOSE OUTLAWS FROM OUR VILLAGE!

"WHY SHED THE LIFE FLUIDS OF YOUR FRIENDS, WHEN THERE IS A SIMPLER SOLUTION TO MY PEOPLE'S PROBLEM--

"--A MYSTICAL SOLUTION I ONCE BEHELD IN MY YOUTH!"

FIRST OF ALL, NOT ALL THOSE CHARACTERS ARE MY FRIENDS! AND SECOND, THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE GETTING INTO WHEN THEY TOOK THIS JOB!

AND THIRD, I OUTGREW FAIRY TALES BY THE TIME I COULD TALK!

NO, HEAR ME, MERCENARY!

MAYBE SOME OTHER TIME, ALL RIGHT?

THEN YOU WILL NOT LISTEN! GRANDDAUGHTER...TAKE HIDING BEFORE SERGI-X COMES--

--WHILE I DO WHAT I WAS BORN TO DO... ALONE!

PLEASE IGNORE THE OLD ONE, HAN SOLO!

HE FANCIES HIMSELF AS A MYSTIC... A SHAMAN... CAPABLE OF SUMMONING SOME LEGENDARY MONSTER TO SAVE OUR VILLAGE!

UH, YEAH! WELL TELL YOU WHAT, ONCHO! AFTER WE'VE USED UP OUR LAST SHOT--

--THEN MAYBE WE'LL TAKE THE CODGER UP ON HIS OFFER! BUT FOR NOW--

FRONK!

--ALL YOU HEROES READY? BLASTERS AT FULL POWER... QUILLS SHARPENED AND ALL THAT?

ME AN' MY ROBOT'S READY, LEADER MAN!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, JUVENILE!

READY WHENEVER YOU GIVE THE WORD, SOLO!

READY! AND IF WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT US RABBITS HAVIN' GOOD EYES IS TRUE--

--THEN I SUGGEST WE GET UP OFF OUR FANNIES AN' COTTON TAILS--

--'CAUSE I GOT A HUNCH TROUBLE'S ON THE WAY...

"BIG TROUBLE--

KR-BLAZZ!

"--AN' IT'S COMIN' AT US HARD AN' FAST.'"

I HOPE YOU PEASANTS *APPRECIATE* OUR SPECTACULAR *ENTRANCE* THIS YEAR! BUT WE HADDA *TOP* OUR *LAST* APPEARANCE IN YOUR SQUALID VILLAGE--

--WHEN WE SIMPLY *CRASHED INTO* A FEW OF YOUR *DWELLINGS*! REMEMBER? *HARRRR*...!!!

BUT YOU *KNOW* WHY WE'RE HERE, SO LET'S NOT WASTE ANYMORE OF MY *VALUABLE TIME*!

YOU CAN START DOLIN' OUT THE *TRIBUTE* YOU'VE BEEN SAVIN' UP FOR US ALL YEAR! *RIGHT*?!

AND THAT INCLUDES THE *CREAM* OF YOUR CROP, WHO JUST REACHED THE AGE I *LIKE* THEM! YOU KNOW, WHAT'S-HER-NAME--?

"--*MERRI*!"

LIKE *HELL* YOU'RE TAKING ANYMORE OUTA THIS VILLAGE, *ARROGANTUS*!

AND IF YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA LAY ONE GRIMY *FINGER* ON THAT GIRL--

--GONNA BE OVER MY *SMOKING BONES*!!

ALL RIGHT, STAR-JUMPERS! LET'S *LET 'EM HAVE IT*!!

SO, THE HIRED GUNS DID NOT TAKE MY *WARNING*!

THEY ARE STILL *HERE*!

ALL RIGHT, THEN, IF THESE SPACE-RATS ARE SO ANXIOUS TO *DIE*--

"--LET'S *GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT*!"

Y'KNOW, MAYBE THIS *WASN'T* SUCH A BRIGHT IDEA!

AT LEAST WHEN WE FOUGHT THE *DEATH STAR*, WE WERE IN *SHIPS*!

BUT *HERE*, THOSE OUTLAWS CAN PICK US OFF LIKE SITTING *WOMP-RATS*!

RIGHT NOW I SURE WISH WE HAD SOME'A THAT *FORCE* I KEEP HEARING ABOUT!

BUT THERE ARE OTHER, THOUGH LESSER, "FORCES" ON HAN SOLO'S SIDE--

SPANG!

URK?

--LIKE THE ROBOTIC FORCE THAT BRINGS A METAL ARM TO SNATCH A LOW-FLYING SKYSPEEDER.

"OR THAT IN THE SHAG-COVERED ARMS OF AN ENRAGED SEVEN-FOOT, WOOKIEE!

N-NO, YOU M-MONSTER! LET ME GO!!

BASH!

OBVIOUSLY, SUCH FORCES CANNOT COMPARE WITH THAT WHICH BINDS TOGETHER THE GALAXY.

YET, IN THEIR OWN, IM-MEDIATE WAY...

...THEY ARE EFFECTIVE.

GRONK!

YOU KNOW, CHEWBACCA! WE MAKE AN EFFECTIVE TEAM AND--

WHAT'S THAT YOU SAID, EFFIE? CAN'T HEAR YOU ABOVE ALL THIS SHOOTIN'!

MORE OUTLAWS.. SNEAKING UP FROM THE REAR!

BLASK!

I AM JUST A TRACTOR-ROBOT ...NOT REALLY PROGRAMMED FOR THIS SORT OF THING!

BUT EVEN THOUGH THE STARKILLER KID IS NOT MY MASTER, I CANNOT LET HIM BE SHOT DOWN BY THAT OUTLAW'S WEAPON--

--EVEN THOUGH IT MEANS MY...

EFFIE!!

BLL-ZAK!

THOUGH THE ROBOT FEEQO CLAIMED NEITHER TO BE SERVANT NOR PET TO THE STARKILLER KID...PERHAPS HE WAS SOMETHING MORE...

...THEIR RELATIONSHIP NOT UNLIKE THAT SHARED BY HAN SOLO AND...

CHEWIE--!!

AMAIZA...DON-WAN... YOU THREE BETTER PROTECT OUR REAR!!

YEAH! THAT'S A SIMPLE ENOUGH ORDER TO GIVE, HOT-SHOT!

BUT THESE SPACE-UGLIES ARE ALSO COMIN' AT US FROM EVERY OTHER DIRECTION!

TAKE CARE, FAIR MAIDEN! BEHIND YOU--

UGHNN! I APPRECIATE THE COMPLIMENT, DON-WAN--

--BUT NOW I NEED YOUR HELP A HELLUVA LOT MORE!

SO IF YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE THAT LIGHT-SABRE OF YOURS--

AYE, IN THE NAME OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, USE IT I SHALL!

SHE SEES THE BLADELIKE BEAM APPEAR AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON...

AND SHE WONDERS IF THIS MADMAN CAN ACTUALLY WIELD THE LEGENDARY WEAPON OF THE JEDI-KNIGHTS...

HE CAN...

MAY YOU PERISH, YOU SCUM WHO WOULD DARE TAINT THE FLESH OF THIS LADY MOST FAIR!!

YAAARRGG!!

HE'S NOT BAD FOR AN OLD-TIMER! BUT HE'S NOT FAST ENOUGH--

--AND THERE'S A SKYSPEEDER ZOOMING DOWN, TOO FAST FOR ME TO GET HIM BEFORE--

ARRGHH!!

KAZZ

ASSH!

FAREWELL, COMELY DAMSEL! AT LEAST YOU SHALL... LIVE...:-

FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, HAN SOLO SEES THE VALIANT OLD MAN DROP. BUT EULOGIES MUST WAIT...

THAT'S TWO OF US DOWN... AND THERE SEEMS TO BE NO LETTING UP OF THE OUTLAW FORCES!

BUT AT LEAST WE SEEM TO HAVE KNOCKED OFF THE LAST OF THOSE SNEAK ATTACKERS, SO--

UH, OH! LOOKS LIKE BIG MOUTH SOLO SPOKE TOO SOON!

HEDJI-- TO YOUR RIGHT....!!

I'M NO AMATEUR, HAN SOLO!

BUT THANKS ANYWAY FOR THE WARNING!

YEAH?! WELL SOMEBODY OUGHTA WARN GRANDPA OUT THERE IT AIN'T HEALTHY WAVIN' HIS ARMS LIKE THAT--

ZIK ZIK ZIK

--'LESS HE LIKES MAKIN' HISSELF AN EASY TARGET!

BUT THE SHAMAN SEEMS NOT TO HEAR THE NOISES OF BATTLE, FOR HIS MIND IS SOMEWHERE ELSE--

--HIS THOUGHTS BURNING THROUGH SOLID STONE WITH THE EASE AND INTENSITY OF A LIGHT-SABRE--

DON'T KNOW WHAT GRAMPS IS HOWLING ABOUT! AND RIGHT NOW I'M TOO BUSY TO CARE!

BOFF!

--UNTIL AN ALMOST INHUMAN SHRIEK ISSUES FROM HIS MOUTH!

THERE! THAT TAKES CARE OF THE LAST OF THOSE SNEAK ATTACKERS FAR AS I CAN TELL!

HEY, JAXXON! HOW'S OUR AMMUNITION HOLDING OUT?!

BUT OUR MAIN ATTACK'S STILL COMING FROM THE SKY!

ZAK!

AIN'T COMPLAININ', SOLO! AN' IF I RUN OUTA POWER, I CAN ALWAYS KICK THOSE RIDERS OUTA THE CLOUDS!

WELL, UNLESS YOU GOT SOME TRICK EXTRA LONG FEET STASHED AWAY, YOU'D BETTER KEEP SHOOTING!

SHA-BRAK!

Yiiiiii!!

YAAAHOOOO!! YOU SEE THAT, RABBIT--?

TALK ABOUT FLYING RIGHT INTO THE LINE OF FIRE!!

NO ONE HAS YET NOTICED THAT THE OLD SHAMAN HAS RELAXED HIS CONCENTRATION...

...OR THAT HE NOW SPEAKS.

HEAR ME, SLUMBERING ONE!

I BEG YOU AWAKEN AS YOU DID IN DECADES PAST! OUR MINDS ARE NOW LINKED TOGETHER AS ONE!

EMERGE FROM YOUR BED-CHAMBERS OF STONE! SAVE US WHOSE ANCESTORS ONCE WORSHIPPED YOU!

WHEN THE ROCK BEGINS TO SHIFT, EVEN HAN SOLO MUST TAKE NOTICE!

OH, HELL! IF WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT!!

THE CARNAGE OF BATTLE CONTINUES, WITH BLASTERS BARKING THEIR MINIATURE EXPLOSIONS...AND WITH THE SKIES ABLAZE WITH THE DEBRIS OF ERUPTING SKYSPEEDERS.

BUT, SOMEHOW, SERJI-X ARROGANTUS AND HIS SURLY BAND OCCUPY SECOND PLACE IN HAN SOLO'S PRIORITIES--

GREE-AARGH!

--AS HE STARES DUMBFOUNDEDLY WHILE THE MOUNTAIN ITSELF IS TORN ASUNDER--FROM WITHIN...

QUITE OBVIOUSLY, THE REAL BATTLE'S YET TO BEGIN!!

NEXT ISSUE: DAY of the BEHEMOTH!

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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS™

KEEP FIRING, CHEWIE-- OR THIS WHOLE PLANET IS DOOMED!

--NOT TO MENTION US!

THE BEHEMOTH FROM BELOW!

HOBERG

LucasFilm PRESENTS: STAR WARS THE GREATEST SPACE FANTASY OF ALL!

CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS, RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX.

BEHEMOTH
FROM THE WORLD BELOW

HAN SOLO'S JOB SEEMED SIMPLE ENOUGH...

...GET TOGETHER A BAND OF ALIEN WARRIORS AND SAVE A VILLAGE FROM THE OUT-LAW SERJI-X ARROGANTUS AND HIS MARAUDING CLOUD RIDERS!

BUT IN THE ORIGINAL DEAL, NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT A MONSTER!

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BUT THEN, EVERYONE ASSUMED THE OLD SHAMAN TO BE A SENILE FOOL--

--INCAPABLE OF ACTUALLY SUMMONING FORTH A SCALY BEHEMOTH LOST IN THE ROCK AND LEGEND OF ADUBA-3--*

SWI-

SPLAK!

--FOR THE SIMPLE PURPOSE OF LASHING OUT AND DESTROYING THIS BAND OF SURLY OUTLAWS...

* LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

...ESPECIALLY THEIR LEADER, SERJI-X... THE ARROGANT ONE!

I REMEMBER HEARING STORIES ABOUT THIS BEASTIE WHEN I WAS A YOUTH!

AND ONE THING ABOUT THOSE STORIES STICKS OUT IN MY MIND...

IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING, IT JUST ISN'T GONNA GO AWAY! AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...

NO MORE TRIBUTE FROM THIS VILLAGE... NO MORE FEMALE AMUSEMENTS!

SO COME ON, MEN! LET'S GET RID OF THE BIG--

BZZ-ZAK!

BUT SERJI-X BEGINS TO WONDER HOW FEASIBLE THAT MIGHT BE, AS ONE-BY-ONE HIS MEN FALL TO THE BEAST!

FRONK!

DON'T ASK ME, CHEWBACCA! THIS WASN'T IN THE ORIGINAL PROGRAM!

NOW WHAT, SOLO?! IF THAT BEHEMOTH'S SIZE AND STRENGTH WEREN'T BAD ENOUGH--

YEAH, I KNOW, HEDJI! IT'S COME EQUIPPED WITH SOME KIND OF BUILT-IN BLASTER!

"WELL," SAYS SOLO TO THE SPINER, "BE THANKFUL FOR ONE THING...

"...THAT THE MONSTER HASN'T ATTACKED US--

"--BUT ONLY THE ONES THE SHAMAN SUMMONED HIM TO FIGHT...

"...SERJI-X AND HIS STINKING CUTTHROATS!!"

INDEED, THE BEHEMOTH SEEMS NOT EVEN TO NOTICE THE PRESENCE OF HAN SOLO AND HIS SMALL ARMY OF MERCENARIES...

KRUNK!

HEY?! WHAT'S THE THING DOIN' NOW??

GREE-ARR!!

IT'S CREATING A LANDSLIDE! THAT'S WHAT! LOOK OUT--

Yy!!!!!!!!!!!!

--AN' MOVE THOSE SKYSPEEDERS!!

IT'S KNOCKING US DOWN LIKE *MAZE-FLIES!!* AND OUR BLASTERS DON'T EVEN FAZE IT!

HEY, LEADER MAN! WHAT D'YA SAY WE *FORGET* THIS PAUPER'S VILLAGE--

--AN' GET *OUTTA* HERE WHILE WE STILL *CAN*?!

KA-

-SPLAK!

NO!! IT'S GETTING TO BE A *PERSONAL* THING BETWEEN ME AND THIS BEASTIE--

--AND I STILL HAVE ME A MOOD TO GET MY HANDS ON THAT GIRL *MERRI*.

SO WE *FIGHT*... TILL THAT THING IS *DEAD!!*

BUT WHEN A CREATURE APPEARS TO BE *INDESTRUCTIBLE*, KILLING IT COULD BECOME A *PROBLEM*.

GRONK!

I *READ* YOU, CHEWIE! AND I'M *MOVING!!*

SH'A-THUD!

WHAT'S THAT YOU WERE SAYING, SOLO--ABOUT THE MONSTER ATTACKING ONLY THE *BAD GUYS*?!

WE JUST GOT IN THE MONSTER'S *WAY*, THAT'S ALL

HMMPF! THIS *ARMOR* MIGHT HAVE SAVED ME FROM THE *SKY-SPEEDER'S BLAST*--*

--BUT I FEAR IT D NOT PERFORM A *LIKE* FUNCTION AGAINST THAT OF THE *BEHEMOTH*.

THEN KEEP HIDDEN BEHIND THESE *ROCKS*, DON-WAN KIHOTAY--

* *SEE LAST ISSUE*--RT.

"--AND LET'S JUST LEAVE OUR BEHEMOTH FRIEND *BE*--

ROO-AARR!

BZZZT!

"--TILL HE'S FINISHED THE *JOB* THE OLD MAN CALLED HIM TO DO!"

THERE'S ONLY A *FEW* OF MY MEN *LEFT!* AND WITHOUT THEM, I MIGHT AS WELL JUST *SURRENDER* TO THOSE MERCENARIES.

BUT *SERGI-X ARROGANTUS* SURRENDERS TO *NOBODY!! NEVER!!*

AND SINCE MY MEN HAVE THEIR *HANDS* FULL'A TROUBLE RIGHT ABOUT NOW--

--SEEMS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO KILL THE BEASTIE *MYSELF!!*

THAT OLD *CODGER*... FOR *YEARS* HE'S BEEN BABBLING ABOUT BEING ABLE TO CONTROL A LEGENDARY *MONSTER!*

LOOKS TO ME LIKE HE WASN'T JUST CHEWING THE *LUNA-WEED!* THERE HE IS, CONTROLLING IT LIKE A *MAESTRO!*

ALL RIGHT, SINCE WE CAN'T SEEM TO EVEN *SCRATCH* THAT BEASTIE'S HIDE--

--IT APPEARS I'LL HAVE TO ATTACK IT THE *ONLY* WAY IT'LL DO ANY *GOOD!*

THAT'S IT, OLD MAN! KEEP STANDING THERE IN *ONE SPOT*--

--AND YOU'LL MAKE A *PERFECT TARGET!*

BROO-SH!

*THE SHAMAN **DOESN'T** MOVE. BUT SERJI-X ARROGANTUS NEVER QUITE **KNOWS** IF HE **STRIKES** HIM OR NOT...*

*...AS BOTH **SHAMAN** AND **OUTLAW CHIEF** ARE TRAMPLED BY A SINGLE GARGANTUAN FOOT!*

WOMP!

SPLAT!

AND, WITHOUT THEIR LEADER--

--THE FEW REMAINING CLOUD-RIDERS ARE QUICK TO FALL.

GUESS THAT'S THE END OF THOSE OUT-LAWS!

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BEHEMOTH?

WELL, WHAT ABOUT IT?

WITH THE OLD MAN DEAD, IT COULD MEAN BAD NEWS FOR MY ENTIRE VILLAGE--

--AND EVERY-ONE IN IT!

THE STAR-KILLER KID AIN'T JUST SUPPOSIN', SOLO!

I THINK YOU'RE GETTING MY MESS-AGE, JAXXON!

WITHOUT THE SHAMAN TO CALL THE SHOTS, THAT BEHEMOTH'S STARTIN' TO GET REALLY MAD!

AND THIS TIME I DON'T THINK IT'S GONNA BE SO PARTICULAR ABOUT WHO IT STOMPS!

HOLD IT THERE, SOLO! WE DIDN'T SIGN ON TO THIS LITTLE BLAST-PARTY OF YOURS TO FIGHT ANY MONSTER!

WE'RE BEING PAID TO GET RID OF SERJI-X AND HIS CRONIES--

--AND SINCE I DON'T SEEM TO SEE THEM AROUND ANYMORE...

LISTEN TO ME-- ALL OF YOU SPACE FREAKS!!

WE DIDN'T EARN THE PAY WE'RE GETTING FOR THIS JOB! THE BEHEMOTH DID!

HMMPF! SOME PAY!

AND IF YOU WANT TO GET EVEN THAT, THERE'D BETTER BE A VILLAGE LEFT STANDING TO PAY US!

BESIDES, I'M GETTING TO LIKE SOME OF THE LOCAL FOLK IN THIS TOWN.

AWWRIGHT, AWWRIGHT ALREADY! SO WE KNOW YOU'RE A LITTLE SOFT ON THAT MERRI FEMALE.

SO YOU TWO CAN STAND AROUND ARGUIN' ABOUT IT!

BUT Y'KNOW HOW US ROCKET-RABBIT TYPES ARE:

WE JUST CAN'T STAND STILL!!

JAXXON!!

AND SINCE I ALWAYS SAY, "NEVER SEND A MAN OUT TO DO A RAB-BIT'S JOB--"

NO WAIT, JAXXON--!!

BZ-ZAK!

GROARR!

THE LEPUS CARNIVORUS IS FAST--POSSIBLY THE SWIFTEST BIPED ON ALL OF ADUBA-3...

BUT IT'S NOT EASY FOR EVEN A HUMANOID RABBIT TO OUT-SPRINT THE MONSTER'S WELL-AIMED ENERGY BLASTS...

THAT LAST SHOT ALMOST TOOK OFF THE RABBIT'S TAIL!

BUT EVEN THOUGH IT MISSED HIM, THE BURST HIT THE ROCK WALL AND--

CRUM-MBL!

HEAVENLY HUTCHES! ROCKS KNOCKED THE GUN OUT'A MY HAND!!

GOT TO REACH THE CRUMMY THING BEFORE--

LEAVE THE BLASTER, JAX!

AND TAKE COVER BETWEEN THE ROCKS! YOU'LL NEVER--

ALREADY HAVE, AMAIZA! BUT DID THESE FLOPPY EARS'A MINE DETECT A LITTLE AFFECTION IN YOUR VOICE?

HMMMMM?!

NAWWW! LIKE MY MOTHER TOLD ALL EIGHTY OF US KIDS--

IT'D NEVER WORK OUT! MARRY A NICE GIRL FROM A NICE BURROW, AN'--

WHOOOOEEEE!! ALMOST DIDN'T SEE THAT ONE!

MAYBE I OUGHT'A GET MY EYES CHECKED IF WE EVER GET OUT'A THIS MESS!

KWUMP!

...WHICH JAXXON BEGINS TO DOUBT, AS HE HEARS A PORTENTIOUS RUMBLE FROM ABOVE...

MOVE THAT TAILLESS FANNY OF YOURS, TOOTS--

--'CAUSE JUNIOR HERE'S STARTED A BLAMED LAND-SLIDE!

COME ON, CHEWIE! GET THAT SEVEN-FOOT WOOKIEE CARCASS OF YOURS MOVING AT TOP SPEED!

YOU OKAY, LADY?

JUST TWISTED MY ANKLE! BUT I'LL LIVE!

HRUG!

HOW ABOUT YOU, JAXXON?

GOT THE WIND KNOCKED OUTTA ME... AND MUSSED UP MY TAIL! BUT OTHERWISE...

ALL RIGHT! THEN, BEFORE THE ROCKS START FALLING AGAIN... CHEWIE, TAKE AMAIZA WHERE IT'S SAFE--

--BUT DON'T SQUEEZE TOO HARD!

LOOK, GROUP! IF WE'RE GONNA KILL THAT WALKING HUNK OF POWER, WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO DO IT AS A TEAM.

EVERYBODY GET BEHIND THESE ROCKS!

THEN, IF WE CAN KEEP OUT OF THE MONSTER'S WAY LONG ENOUGH TO PLAN SOME KIND OF GROUP ATTACK--

INDEED, THEY BE FOOLS TO THINK THAT SUCH A DRAGON MIGHT BE SLAIN BY THEIR CRUDE METHODS--

--FOR IT REQUIRES THE SKILLS OF ONE TRAINED IN THE HOLY ORDER OF THE JEDI KNIGHTS!

OOPS!! WE'LL DO OUR PLANNING LATER!

BLAZT!

'CAUSE RIGHT NOW, GUESS WHO'S BACK?!

RUNK!

DIDN'T MEAN THAT *LITERALLY*, CHEWIE!

OKAY, HEROES-- GET YOURSELVES OUT OF SIGHT AND DO IT *FAST!*

THE BEHEMOTH'S SHOOTING THOSE *RAYS* AT US AGAIN!

BUT IF IT DOESN'T *SEE* US FOR A WHILE, MAYBE IT'LL THINK IT *GOT* US!

THEN MAYBE WE'LL BUY THE *TIME* TO--

SCRATCH THAT PLAN! THE THING'S READY TO BLAST US AGAIN! AND IT'S AIMING RIGHT FOR THAT WA--

BRM-MMBL!!

ANOTHER LANDSLIDE!!

GRK!

IF ANYBODY EVER TOLD ME I'D HAVE 'TA DO *THIS* MUCH RUNNIN' ON THIS MISSION, I'D OF--

HEY, *CHEWBACCA*-- LET *GO!*

I CAN MOVE OUTTA THE WAY *MYSELF*, Y'KNOW!

THE BEHEMOTH *DOESN'T GIVE UP*, DOES IT?!

NO? WELL, NEITHER DO *WE!* AND I'M GETTING AN IDEA HOW WE MIGHT *GET RID* OF THAT NIGHTMARE!

BUT IT'S GONNA TAKE DON-WAN'S *LIGHT-SABRE* TO DO IT

YOU *HEAR* ME, DON-WAN? YOU NEVER TOLD HOW YOU *GOT* A JEDI KNIGHT'S WEAPON, BUT IT STILL--

DON-WAN..?

OH NO! LOOK!! WE'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!

BUT WHAT HAN SOLO HAS JUST SEEN MEANS NOTHING TO THE PILOT OF A SMALL SPACE CRUISER--

--WHICH NOW STREAKS FROM THE DENSE JUNGLE GROWTH OF THE FOURTH SATELLITE OF THE PLANET YAVIN--

--TO BE SWALLOWED BY SILENT SPACE...

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO GENERAL DODONNA AND THE OTHERS! I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS RIGHT AWAY!

THE PILOT: PRINCESS LEIA, A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL SENATE...

HER MISSION...?

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO LUKE AND I'M GOING TO FIND HIM--

--EVEN IF I'VE GOT TO DO IT ALONE!

HE'D GONE OFF WITH THE TWO ROBOTS TO FIND A NEW PLANET FOR THE REBELS...

AND THEN, JUST AS HE SAW SOMETHING AND WAS ABOUT TO TELL US WHAT IT WAS--

--WE LOST ALL COMMUNICATION WITH HIM!*

AND THERE WAS NO WAY FOR US TO MAKE CONTACT WITH HIM AGAIN!

*LAST ISSUE AGAIN. --ROY.

BUT IF I CAN FIND THE POINT LUKE WAS AT WHEN WE LAST HEARD FROM HIM, MAYBE THERE'LL BE SOMETHING I CAN DO!

I CAN'T JUST LET HIM BE SWALLOWED UP--ONE MORE CASUALTY OF THE REBELLION AGAINST THE EMPIRE!

IT'S TOO BAD HAN SOLO HAD TO ROCKET OFF TO SPEND HIS REWARD MONEY!*

I COULD USE THAT STAR-HOPPER'S HELP RIGHT ABOUT NOW!

*STAR WARS #7. --R.T.

HELP?!

A JEDI KNIGHT NEEDS THE HELP OF *NO* ONE--LEAST OF ALL A MERCENARY SUCH AS *HAN SOLO!*

ALL THAT I NEED IS THE *LIGHTSABRE* HELD IN MY *STEADY HAND...*

...AND THE *COURAGE* AND *SKILL* TO *USE IT!*

HOLD, BEHEMOTH! AND, IF YOU DARE, *FACE ME!*

GRRRR!

WHETHER IT IS THE SOUND OF THE OLD MAN'S *VOICE* OR THE PULSATING *WEAPON* THAT HE HOLDS--

--*SOMETHING* ATTRACTS THE BEHEMOTH'S ATTENTION!

LOOK! YOU SEE WHAT THAT CRAZY OLD FOOL IS *DOING?!*

YEAH! LIKE HOW TO GET YOURSELF *KILLED* IN ONE EASY *LESSON!*

SURE DO! HE'S LEADING THAT MONSTER *AWAY* FROM US... SO'S HE CAN FACE IT *ALONE!*

MAYBE HE'S *NOT* SO CRAZY! MAYBE HE REALLY *WAS* A JEDI KNIGHT--

--AND KNOWS SOMETHING *WE DON'T!*

YOU HEAR THEIR *JEERS,* BEHEMOTH? THEY THINK DON-WAN KIHOTAY TO BE TOO *OLD* FOR THE NOBLE ART OF *COMBAT!*

YET EVEN ONE OF SO *ADVANCED* YEARS IS STILL AS *ONE* WITH THE *FORCE*--

--WHICH PERMITS EVEN *THESE* STIFF AND WEARY BONES--

--TO EVADE *WHATEVER* HELL-SPAWNED BOLTS YOU MIGHT HURL TOWARD ME!!

BZZZAM!

AND *NOW*, BEHEMOTH, THE TIME FOR A *FINAL CONFLICT* IS UPON US!

NEEDLESS TO ADD--

--BUT *ONE* OF US SHALL EMERGE FROM THE BATTLE *ALIVE!!*

BOLDLY, THE AGED WOULD-BE KNIGHT STALKS TOWARD THE BEHEMOTH--

--AND, IF ONLY FOR MOMENTS, THE MONSTER *PAUSES*, ITS SCALY HEAD *LIFTING*.

YOU *SEE* THAT??!

THE MONSTER'S REACTING *FUNNY*, THE CLOSER HE GETS WITH THAT *LIGHT-SABRE!*

THEN I THINK MY HUNCH IS *RIGHT!* I THINK IT'S--

--HEY, *HEDJI*... *SPINER*... WHERE DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOING!

WHERE *YOU* SHOULD *ALL* HAVE BEEN BY NOW, HAN SOLO--

--TO HELP AN OLD WARRIOR WHO'S PUT HIS OWN *LIFE* ON THE LINE TO SAVE *ALL* OF US!

LISTEN TO ME, DON-WAN! MAYBE YOU *DID* STUMBLE ONTO A *LIGHTSABRE* SOMEWHERE, AFTER THE EMPIRE HAD *CRUSHED* THE REAL JEDI KNIGHTS--

--AND MAYBE IT *WARPED* YOU INTO THINKING *YOU* WERE A JEDI--

--BUT YOU'RE NOT *FAST* ENOUGH TO KEEP AVOIDING THOSE *BOLTS!*

KEEP BACK! NO ONE... NEITHER *MAN* NOR *SPINER*... MUST INTERFERE WITH A *JEDI KNIGHT'S* TASK!

SLAYING THE BEAST IS *MY* MISSION! AND SLAY HIM I *SHALL!!*

I TRIED TO REASON WITH YOU, KIHOTAY--BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN! ALL RIGHT THEN, DON'T--

ZIK ZIK

YOU'RE GETTING MY HELP WHETHER YOU WANT IT OR NOT!

THERE ARE BUT FEW SPINERS REMAINING IN THE GALAXY.

BUT THOSE THAT DO REMAIN CAN FIRE THEIR BODY-QUILLS WITH ASTOUNDING ACCURACY...

FTT!

FTT!

FTT!

USUALLY, ANY ONE OF THESE QUILLS WOULD BRING INSTANT DEATH TO ITS VICTIM...

CRAZ-

-ZZL!

YET, THIS TIME--

--A WHOLE BARRAGE OF THE NEEDLE-LIKE WEAPONS ONLY FURTHER ANGER THE BEHEMOTH!

=WHHUUUUU!!!=

ZZ-

BLAM!

THE QUILLS DIDN'T DO MUCH GOOD, DID THEY?!

HANG THE QUILLS! IT'S THAT LIGHTSABRE THAT'S GETTING THAT MONSTER ALL RILED UP!

DON'T YOU ALL SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING?

THE SWORD'S ACTING LIKE AN OLD-FASHIONED LIGHTNING ROD--

--INTERFERING WITH THAT ENERGY BEAM THE CREATURE SHOOTS FROM ITS FIN!

"EVEN A *DUMB BRUTE* LIKE THAT CAN *SENSE* THAT THE LIGHTSABRE'S A *THREAT* TO ITS LIFE," SHOUTS SOLO.

"THAT'S WHY THE *CLOSER* DON-WAN GETS, THE *CRAZIER* THE BEHEMOTH ACTS!

"BUT THE OLD GUY'S TOO *SLOW!* IF I COULD RUN *FAST* ENOUGH, MAYBE *I* COULD --"

GRONK!?

URK!!

EVEN *I* READ *THAT* ONE, CHEWBACCA! *DO* IT!!

WHICH THE TOWERING WOOKIEE DOES... WITH *INCREDIBLE* SPEED...

HEEEEY, YOU STUFFED..

OH, *I* GET YOU!

SURE! WITH THOSE STOVE-PIPE *LEGS* OF YOURS AND THE *SPEED* THAT COMES WITH 'EM--

GREEA-

-ARRG!

--WE JUST MIGHT *SAVE* THE OLD MADMAN *YET!!*

A FEW MORE STRIDES OF THOSE GREAT SHAGGY LEGS, AND...

OKAY, PAL! SET ME *DOWN!*

LISTEN, DON-WAN, I APPRECIATE THE *HEROICS!* BUT EVEN THOUGH YOUR *INTENTIONS* ARE GOOD--

--YOU'RE JUST NOT *MAKING* IT!

HAN SOLO!! BUT WHY ARE YOU INTERRUPTING MY *HOLY TASK?!*

YOU'VE **GOT** SOMETHING I **NEED**, FRIEND--AND I JUST STOPPED BY TO **BORROW** IT!

N-NO! YOU COMMIT **BLASPHEMY!**

PERHAPS. AND THOUGH DON-WAN KIHOTAY TRIES IN VAIN TO **TEAR** THE LIGHTSABRE FROM SOLO'S GRASP--

--AGAIN, THE TASK IS **BEYOND** ONE OF HIS YEARS...

NEVER USED ONE OF THESE GADGETS BEFORE! AND **I'M** CERTAINLY NO **JEDI KNIGHT!**

BUT I'VE USED MOST **OTHER** HAND-WEAPONS--

--SO MAYBE **THIS** BABY WON'T GIVE ME **TOO** MUCH TROUBLE! MAYBE.

SEEMS I REMEMBER **HEARING** ONCE ABOUT A JEDI KILLING A MONSTER SOMETHING LIKE THIS WITH A **LIGHTSABRE**...

...SOMETHING ABOUT THE **LIGHT-BLADE** COUNTER-ACTING THE **ENERGY**--

ZZZAK!

--THAT POWERS THE MONSTER'S **FIN BOLTS** AND--

HOLY BEEK-MONKEYS!! THAT WAS **CLOSE!!**

ALL RIGHT, UGLY! I'VE NO MORE TIME TO **FOOL AROUND** WITH YOU!

IT'S ABOUT TIME I FIND OUT IF THAT **IDEA** OF MINE IS **RIGHT OR WRONG!**

THEN, THRUSTING WITH A WEAPON HE HAS NEVER WIELDED BEFORE--

--HAN SOLO MAKES A SUDDEN **DASH** TOWARD THE CREATURE'S CHEST.

A MOMENT LATER, THE MONSTER GOES **BERSERK**--

--LASHING AND BLASTING AT **EVERYTHING**...

ROARING HIDEOUSLY...

TAKE COVER!!

DON'T KNOW IF I DID THE BEHEMOTH ANY **DAMAGE!**

BUT I SURE AS BLAZES GOT IT **MAD!!**

BUT SURPRISINGLY, THE BEHEMOTH SUDDENLY **HALTS** ITS HAPHAZARD ATTACK... ITS MASSIVE HULK NOW **TWISTING** IN **CONVULSIONS**...

THEN, THE LIGHT-SABRE **FLASHING** IN THE MONSTER'S HEAVING CHEST, THERE COMES A STRANGE **CRACK-LING** FROM **WITHIN** THE CREATURE AND...

AARR-RA!!

THE FORCE IS **WITH US**, HAN SOLO! THE LIGHTSABRE IS **DESTROYING** THE BEHEMOTH! THE DEMON IS BEGINNING TO **DISINTEGRATE!**

YOU **HEAR** THE MAN, CHEWIE? LOOKS LIKE YOUR SMUGGLER PAL CAME THROUGH **AFTER ALL!**

FRONK!!

WHEN THE LAST FADING IMAGE OF THE BEHEMOTH IS SWEPT AWAY BY THE WINDS OF ADUBA-3...

GUESS IT'S ALL OVER, HEROES!

NOT QUITE, LEADER-MAN! MY POCKETS ARE STILL EMPTY!

THEY WON'T BE, SOON AS THE PEASANTS PAY US!

SPEAKING OF WHICH... HERE THEY COME!

GREAT! THEN AFTER I GET MY SHARE, I CAN FINALLY GET OFF THIS CRUMMY PLANET--

--BEFORE I TOTALLY CRACK... UP?

HELLO, JIMM! I SAW WHAT YOU DID TODAY! YOU WERE VERY BRAVE!

B-BUT, YOU NEVER EVEN LOOKED AT ME BEFORE! THAT'S ONE'A THE REASONS I...

I'M LOOKING NOW, JIMM!

AND PERHAPS I CAN SOMEHOW CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT LEAVING OUR LITTLE VILLAGE!

BUT FIRST--

--THANK YOU, HAN SOLO...

HUH?!

...FOR SAVING OUR VILLAGE... AND ALSO BRINGING OUT THE MAN IN THE STAR-KILLER "KID"!

AFTER THE MEAGER PAYMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE...

...AND FIVE WEARY HEROES RETURN TO THEIR BANTHA MOUNTS...

SEE YOU AROUND, SOLO! DROP BY THE VILLAGE SOME-TIME! HEAR?

SO I DIDN'T GET THE GIRL! WHO CARES?! SHE WAS KIND OF YOUNG ANYWAY!

AT LEAST NOW I CAN AFFORD TO GET THE MILLENNIUM FALCON OUT OF HOCK!

AND IF ONLY FOR A MINUTE, I GOT A LITTLE FEELING OF WHAT IT'S LIKE--

--TO BE A JEDI KNIGHT!

NEXT ISSUE: STAR WARS CONTINUES WITH THE SEARCH FOR LUKE SKYWALKER!

STAR WARS™

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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS

ARTOO! THREEPIO! INTO THE *SHIP*--

MY BLASTER'S NOT *STOPPING* THIS THING!

THIS ISSUE:

THE FATE OF LUKE SKYWALKER!

BUT, MASTER *LUKE*--THE SHIP IS *SINKING!*

Long ago in a galaxy far, far away. . .there exists a state of cosmic *civil war*. A brave alliance of *underground freedom fighters* has challenged the tyranny and oppression of the awesome *Galactic Empire*. This is their story!

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JOE ROSEN, LETTERER • JANICE COHEN, COLORIST

ROY THOMAS • CONSULTING EDITOR

STAR SEARCH!

THE PLANET IS CALLED **ADUBA-3**. IT IS A BACKWATER WORLD, ONE OF THE MANY ON THE GALACTIC RIM, TOO POOR, TOO DISTANT FOR THE **EMPIRE'S** DARK INTEREST...

THE SHIP IS THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON**. TO SOME IT MIGHT SEEM A BATTERED, ORDINARY **FREIGHTER**... IF THEY HAD NEVER SMUGGLED SPICE ON THE **KESSEL RUN**...

...OR CHALLENGED THE TIE FIGHTER OF SITH LORD, **DARTH VADER**, IN THE BATTLE OF THE **DEATH STAR**...

...OR TALKED TO ITS CAPTAIN, **HAN SOLO.**

BETTER SAY **GOOD-BYE** WHILE YOU CAN, CHEWIE... I'M COMPUTING FOR THE JUMP TO **HYPERSPACE.**

THAT HUNK OF ROCK AND SAND WASN'T **MUCH--**

--BUT IT WAS HOME SWEET HOME FOR A **LITTLE WHILE.** WHEN YOU'VE A **PRICE** ON YOUR HEAD LIKE **WE** DO... THAT'S AS MUCH AS YOU CAN EXPECT OF **ANY** PLACE!

GROWK!

YEAH, YOU'RE **RIGHT.** WE MADE SOME INTERESTING **ACQUAINTANCES** THERE, TOO! QUITE A **CREW,** REALLY... CONSIDERING I FIRST HAD THEM ALL PEGGED AS **DOWN** AND DEFINITELY **OUT** STAR-HOPPERS!*

*SEE ISSUE #8-- ARCH

"**JIMM,** THE STARKILLER KID... HIS ROBOT, **EFFIE**... **AMAIZA,** OUR LADY FRIEND FROM THE BLACK HOLE GANG... **JAXXON,** WHO LOOKED LIKE A **BUNNY** AND FOUGHT LIKE A **TIGER**... **DON-WAN KIHOTAY** CRAZY OLD TIMER WHO **THOUGHT** HE WAS A JEDI KNIGHT... AND **HEDJI,** THE QUILL-THROWING **SPINER**...

"PRETTY **MOTLEY** ASSORTMENT... EVEN WHEN YOU ADD ONE CORRELLIAN SPACE ACE LIKE **ME** AND A FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD **WOOKIEE** LIKE YOURSELF, CHEWBACCA. STILL...

"...WE **CAME THROUGH** AS CHAMPIONS FOR THOSE FARMER-TYPES AGAINST THE **CLOUD RIDERS**... BUT AT A **PRICE,** AND A DAMN **HIGH** ONE!"

WHO **KNOWS?** MAYBE SOMEDAY US **SURVIVORS** WILL TEAM UP AGAIN. BUT FOR NOW, I FIGURE RATHER THAN **RUNNING** FROM ONE RIM-WORLD TO THE NEXT--

--WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE OUR CHANCES **REJOINING** LUKE SKYWALKER AND PRINCESS LEIA AT THE REBEL BASE.

VORP?

NO, NOT BECAUSE I *MISS* THEM! DON'T LET A FEW GOOD DEEDS MAKE YOU THINK I'M GOING *SOFT*... IT'S SHREWD *STRATEGY*, THAT'S ALL!

I'M NOT *ABOUT* TO LOSE MY STANDING AS A *MERCENARY!*

NOW HANG ONTO YOUR *FUR*... WE'RE GOING TO POP INTO *LIGHT SPEED.*

*HAN SOLO'S FINGERS MOVE OVER THE CONTROLS... AND SUDDENLY THE STARS BECOME DOPPLER-DISTORTED **STREAMERS** AS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON SURGES INTO HYPERSPACE!*

*THE VAST GULFS OF INTERGALACTIC SPACE GRADUALLY **FALL AWAY...***

UNTIL...

DROPPING BACK TO *SUB-LIGHT*, CHEWIE, WE'RE STILL WELL *SHY* OF THE YAVIN SYSTEM... BUT IF *IMPERIAL FORCES* HAVE SHOWN UP THERE AGAIN--*

--WE WON'T *HELP* BY POPPING UP RIGHT IN THE *MIDDLE* OF THEM!

AS THEY DID WITH THE **DEATH STAR IN ISSUES #5 & 6--ARCH.*

*BUT FIRST CHECK OF THE SPACEWAYS ABOUT THEM REVEALS **NOTHING.** THEN...*

URROWK!

I *SEE* THE SCOPE, CHEWIE! *CRUISER* COMING ON US... AT *BATTLE SPEED!* HIT THE *DEFLECTORS* AND GET READY TO--

WAIT A *MINUTE!*

THAT'S NOT ONE OF THE *EMPIRE* SHIPS! IT'S OUR OLD *PIRATE* PAL... ***CRIMSON JACK!***

THE ONE WHO MADE OFF WITH OUR *TREASURE*, BIG BUDDY!

IT CAN'T BE A ***COINCIDENCE!*** THAT FORTUNE-HUNGRY PARASITE MUST'VE PLANTED SOME KIND OF ***TRACER*** ABOARD THE ***FIRST*** TIME HE GRABBED US!*

I ***HATE*** DIRTY TRICKS LIKE THAT... PARTICULARLY WHEN ***I*** DON'T PULL THEM ***FIRST!***

THERE'S HIS ***WARNING SHOT!*** SHUT 'ER ***DOWN***, CHEWIE... I'VE GOT AN ***IDEA!***

*BACK IN STAR WARS #7-- ARCHIE

*AND SHORTLY, **TRACTOR BEAMS** HAUL THE MILLENNIUM FALCON INTO THE GIANT CRAFT'S **HOLD**. THERE, A WAITING **HORDE** SWARMS EAGERLY ABOARD...*

WELL, WELL... ***SOLO!*** MY LITTLE PLAYMATE, ***JOLLI***, SAID I'D WASTED MY TRACER... SAID YOU'D NEVER BE ***STUPID*** ENOUGH TO STRAY INTO ***MY*** SECTOR AGAIN!

BUT I ***PRIDE*** MYSELF ON RECOGNIZING A ***STEADY CUSTOMER!***

THIS TIME HE'S COME ***EMPTY-HANDED***, CAP'N! THERE'S ***NOTHING*** HERE TO BUY THE LIVES OF HIM AND THAT HULKIN' ***FURBALL!***

WURK?

NO ***PROBLEM***, PAL... THE REBELS COULD ***USE*** A CRUISER LIKE THIS. I'M GOING TO PLAY ON OL' JACK'S ***GREED*** TO BRING HIM RIGHT ***TO*** THEM!

WE'LL PROBABLY GET ***REWARDED*** ALL ***OVER*** AGAIN LIKE WHEN WE RESCUED THE ***PRINCESS*** AND--

UH-***OH!***

I ***SEE*** IT... BUT I DON'T ***BELIEVE*** IT.

WURG!

DON'T JUMP TO *CONCLUSIONS*, CHEWIE--

--BUT, YEAH, THIS *MAY* MEAN A VERY *LARGE CRIMP* IN MY PLAN!

STILL AN EVER-READY EYE FOR THE *LADIES*, EH, SOLO? EVEN WITH YOUR *TAIL* IN A SLING...!

WELL, THIS IS A *SPECIAL* ONE, ALL RIGHT. PRINCESS *AND* SENATOR, NO LESS.

AND *REBEL* BESIDES! I FIGURE THE ALLIANCE WILL PAY A SMART *RANSOM* FOR HER... ONLY *SHE* WON'T TELL ME WHERE THEIR *BASE* IS!

SO YOU CAN THEN *SELL* THAT INFORMATION TO THE *EMPIRE*? THIS CRUISER WILL *RUST* AROUND YOUR *EARS* BEFORE I TELL YOU *ANY-THING!*

SPUNKY, ISN'T SHE, MR. SOLO? WE CAUGHT HER ALL *ALONE*, HOPPING ACROSS THE VOID... NERVY, BUT *FOOLISH*.

OF COURSE, THE RIGHT *EXAMPLE* COULD *CURE* THE PRINCESS' FOOLISHNESS. THAT'S WHERE *YOU* AND YOUR *WOOKIEE FRIEND* COME IN, MY BOY.

JOLLI, YOU AND THE LADS SET YOUR BLASTERS AT *SLOW BURN!* WE'RE GOING TO *FRY* A PAIR OF PENNILESS STAR-ROVERS--

GRURK!

NOT ON YOUR *LIFE*, MISTER... WHICH IS ABOUT TO BECOME *SHORT, HOT* AND *VERY UNHAPPY!*

--TO *DEMONSTRATE* WHAT'S IN STORE FOR LEIA ORGANA HERE IF SHE DOESN'T *COOPERATE!*

WAIT A *MINUTE*, JACK--

VRAWK!

DOWN, CHEWIE!

I NEED TIME TO *TALK*... AND *YOU'RE* GONNA HAVE TO *BUY* IT FOR ME!

THE GIANT WOOKIEE **NEEDS** NO FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS! WITH SPEED SEEMINGLY **IMPOSSIBLE** FOR HIS GREAT BULK, HE IS UP AGAIN AND **MOVING**...

...MOVING INTO BLASTS MEANT TO KILL **SLOWLY**...

ROWRR!

WHUNG!

...AND CHEWBACCA HAS NO INTENTION OF STANDING **STILL** FOR THAT!

GREAT *GOING*, FIRST MATE!

GOTTA CHANGE THIS SETTING *FAST*, THEN--

CALL OFF THE *HOUNDS*, JACK! YOU'VE GOT THE MEN AND FIRE-POWER TO TAKE US *OUT*--

--BUT IT'LL BE ROUGH GLOATING WITHOUT A *HEAD!*

A WORTHWHILE *POINT*, MR. SOLO... IF MY MEN DON'T PICK *YOU* OFF *FIRST*.

YOU CAN PROBABLY GET A FEW MOMENTS *DISCUSSION* OUT OF IT BEFORE SOMEONE *TRIES*.

SOME DAY, JACK, WE'RE GOING TO TALK WHEN YOU DON'T *HAVE* ANY MEN--

BUT IF CHEWIE AND I DIE *NOW*, YOU'LL MISS OUT ON THE *TREASURE*... PLUS A BLOODLESS AND *EASY WAY* TO GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM THE PRINCESS!

WHAT TREASURE, SOLO...? WE TOOK THAT FROM YOU *LAST* TIME.

AND I *CRIED* A LOT ABOUT IT, REDBEARD! THEN I REALIZED THERE *WAS* A WAY TO GET *MORE*... BUT IT'D TAKE A *CRUISER* TO PULL IT OFF! WHY DO YOU THINK I *LET* YOU GRAB THE MILLENNIUM FALCON--

--WITHOUT EVEN A *CHASE*, JACK? I WAS *COMING* TO YOU WITH THIS *PROPOSITION* ANYWAY!

SOLO, I *TRUST* YOU ABOUT AS MUCH AS I'D TRUST RIDING A *SPICE-KEG* THROUGH A *METEOR SWARM*--

BUT YOU'VE INTRIGUED ME ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU A *REPRIEVE*... AND A *FREE MEAL*.

*AND SOME TIME **LATER** IN THE PIRATE MASTER'S QUARTERS, A **FEAST** IS UNDERWAY... AS IS A GREAT DEAL OF **FAST TALKING** BY THE SKIPPER OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON.*

...REALIZE I'M IN A POOR *BARGAINING POSITION*, JACK, SO I'M WILLING TO *SETTLE* FOR A FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT.

I'LL FILL YOUR *FACE* WITH THE BUSINESS END OF MY *BLASTER*, YOU CORRELLIAN CONNIVER!

CAP'N, HOW MUCH *LONGER* ARE WE GOING TO PUT UP WITH HIS *SPACE GAS*?!

YOU PROVIDE THE *ATTACK FORCE*... I PROVIDE THE LOOT'S *LOCATION*. JOLLI, FILL MY *CUP* AGAIN, WILL YOU, SWEETHEART?

AH, JOLLI...! WHEN WILL YOU LEARN THAT A MAN CAN *ALWAYS* BE KILLED *LATER*...BUT A LOST *OPPORTUNITY* IS VERY *DIFFICULT* TO REVIVE.

BRRRE!

YEAH, CHEWIE--

--OUR NEW PARTNER IS *SOMETHING!* HE THINKS, HE DRINKS, HE *PHILOSOPHIZES!*

EVEN IF HE *WAS* A LITTLE QUICK ON THE TRIGGER *HIMSELF* BACK THERE IN THE HOLD.

AND I COULD BE *AGAIN*... 'PARTNER!' WE'RE PAST *DESSERT* BUT I'M STILL HUNGRY FOR SOLID *PROOF* OF THIS '*TREASURE*' BUSINESS--

--*OR* YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE *PRINCESS LEIA* HERE *COOPERATE!*

HAPPY TO *OBLIGE*, JACK! YOU SEE, THAT TIDY *FORTUNE* YOU PRIED FROM ME WAS A *REWARD*... DIRECT FROM THE *TREASURY* OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE--

--FOR RESCUING *THIS* LADY FROM THE EMPIRE'S CLUTCHES!

BY THE BLACK NEBULA, THERE *HAVE* BEEN *RUMORS* ABOUT SUCH A RESCUE! BUT--

BUT WHAT *NO ONE* KNOWS IS THAT *DURING* THAT RESCUE, THE PRIM AND PROPER *PRINCESS*--

--FELL IN *LOVE!*

PUT SOME *FEELING* INTO IT, YOUR ROYALNESS... OUR *LIVES* ARE AT STAKE.

THANKS FOR KEEPING *SILENT* UP TILL NOW... I *KNOW* IT GOES AGAINST YOUR NATURE NOT TO BE SCREAMING ABOUT WHAT I'M DOING *WRONG.*

ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN *SPEECH-LESS--*

--IT'S *LONG* ENOUGH SINCE ESCAPING THE *DEATH STAR* THAT I'D FORGOTTEN JUST HOW *MUDDLED* YOUR RESCUES GET!

JUST *WHAT* IS THIS SUP-POSED TO *ACCOMPLISH...?*

I'M NOT *SURE,* BUT AT LEAST IT'S *FUN!* AND THE *MORE* FRIEND JACK HAS TO *THINK* ABOUT, THE *LONGER* HE'LL KEEP US *ALIVE!*

THEN ALLOW *ME* TO MAKE A CONTRI-BUTION--

HOW *DARE* YOU, HAN SOLO?! HOW DARE YOU *BETRAY* MY FEELINGS FOR YOU?!

WRAP!

WUD!

I CAN'T *STOP* YOU FROM LEADING THESE VERMIN TO OUR *TREASURY* IN THE *DREXEL SYSTEM...* YOU ALREADY *KNOW* THE APPROACH THROUGH ITS *DEFENSE GRID.*

BUT *LUKE SKYWALKER* IS THERE, TOO... THAT MEANS SOME *SURPRISES* IN STORE FOR YOU!

CAPTAIN... I'D LIKE TO *RETURN* TO MY CELL!

TAKE HER *BACK,* JOLLI.

AND AS THE ***SOLE SURVIVOR*** *OF THE PLANET ALDERAAN'S RULING HOUSE IS LED AWAY...*

I DOUBT YOU'LL *EVER* CHARM THAT *FIRE-BRAND* INTO COOPERATION, SOLO... BUT SHE'LL BE A VALUABLE *HOSTAGE* IF THIS *SKYWALKER* GIVES US TROUBLE.

WHO *IS* HE ANYWAY?

UH... SORT OF A *RIVAL...* REALLY GETS *AROUND...*

...IT *SEEMS.*

THEN WE'D BEST DO SOME GETTING AROUND *OURSELVES!* UP TO THE *BRIDGE*... AND START COMPUTING OUR COURSE TO THE *DREXEL* SYSTEM!

NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE *SAYING* THIS TO A SPICE-SMUGGLING SHARPIE LIKE YOU, SOLO... BUT YOU ACTUALLY *SEEM* TO HAVE TOLD THE *TRUTH!*

GRRLURK!

SURE, *SURE*, CHEWIE... SUDDENLY EVERYTHING IS GOING *OUR* WAY.

SO WHY DO *I* FEEL LIKE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN *HAD*?

IT'S THAT *PRINCESS!* WE MEET UP AND ALL AT ONCE I GET SUCKED INTO DOING SOMETHING *STUPID*--

--LIKE PLAYING *HERO!*

MOVE IT, YOU TWO STAR-HOPPERS... BEFORE THOSE CRAFTY *REBELS* MOVE THEIR *TREASURE* STORE!

AND UNDER CRIMSON JACK'S ROARING **COMMANDS**, *THE PIRATE CRUISER BUILDS FOR THE LEAP INTO* **LIGHTSPEED**...

WHILE DOWN IN THE **RETENTION BLOCK**...

FOR A PAMPERED *NOBLE-LADY*, YOU HANDLED THAT WISE-MOUTHED CORRELLIAN PRETTY *WELL*, PRINCESS --

'COURSE I'D PUT A *BLASTER* IN HIS BELLY IF HE TRIED KISSING *ME!*

IS IT *HAN SOLO* YOU DON'T LIKE, JOLLI... OR CORRELLIANS IN *GENERAL*?

IT'S *MEN*, LADY... THE WHOLE BLASTED *BREED*! A SMOOTH-TALKIN' *HANDSOME* ONE IS NO BETTER THAN ANY OTHER... AND MAYBE *WORSE*!

THERE *ARE* GOOD MEN, JOLLI... A *PIRATE* VESSEL MAY NOT BE THE BEST PLACE TO *FIND* THEM.

CERTAINLY, I'VE HAD MY *PROBLEMS* WITH MISTER SOLO. STILL--

--HE *DOES* KISS WELL.

ZISP

WELL, WHAT DOES A HIGH, MUCKETY-MUCK REBEL *PRINCESS* KNOW ABOUT ANYTHING *ANYWAY*?!

KLONG

KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS ON MEN AND KISSING TO *YOURSELF*!

*THE LADY PIRATE STORMS FROM THE DETENTION AREA, **DISTURBED** BY HER OWN ANGER, UNCERTAIN **WHY** IT SUDDENLY ERUPTED...*

*...LEAVING PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA ALONE IN THE DARKNESS WITH HER **OWN** THOUGHTS.*

*RIGHT NOW SHE HAS **MANY**. FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF HER HOME WORLD **ALDERAAN**, TO THE PROBLEMS OF WARRING AGAINST A STILL-STRONG **EMPIRE**, TO HER OWN IMMEDIATE **PERIL**. YET **MOSTLY**, HER MIND FLIES TO VISIONS OF **ONE** YOUNG MAN...*

*...A FARM-BOY OF THE DESERT WORLD **TATOOINE** TURNED **STAR-WARRIOR**--*

*--**LUKE SKYWALKER**!*

OH, LUKE... *LUKE!* IF ONLY YOU HADN'T VOLUNTEERED FOR THAT *SCOUTING* MISSION--

--THEN WE'D *BOTH* BE SAFE BACK AT OUR *MAIN BASE* ON THE FOURTH MOON OF *YAVIN.*

"BUT AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE *DEATH STAR*, THERE WAS NO WAY TO BE *CERTAIN* WHETHER OR NOT DARTH VADER HAD SUCCEEDED IN REPORTING OUR *POSITION* TO EMPIRE FORCES...

WE *HAVE* TO SEEK A NEW *HIDING PLACE*, YOUR MAJESTY... AND YOUNG SKYWALKER *HAS* PROVEN HIMSELF ONE OF OUR *BEST* STAR-PILOTS.

AND I'M NEEDED *HERE*... AS BOTH *SYMBOL* AND *LEADER* OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE. I *UNDERSTAND*, GENERAL DODONNA--

--BUT I *STILL* WISH I WERE GOING *WITH* HIM!

"AT LEAST I COULD TAKE COMFORT THAT YOU WEREN'T *ALONE*... THAT YOU HAD *COMPANIONS*, THE LOYAL *DROIDS*, ARTOO DETOO AND SEE THREEPIO. BUT WHEN AT LAST YOU MADE *TRANCEIVER COMMUNICATION*...

I THINK I'VE FOUND A NEW *SAFE HAVEN*, PRINCESS! IT'S A PLANET IN THE *DREXEL* SYSTEM, THAT--

NO! IT-- IT ISN'T *POSSIBLE!* IT--

WHAT'S *HAPPENING?!* WE'RE LOSING *CONTACT!*

"IT WAS *NEVER* REGAINED! *SOMETHING* HAPPENED TO YOU AND YOUR SHIP WHILE ORBITING AN *UNNAMED PLANET* THERE IN THE *DREXEL* STAR SYSTEM! AND I *KNEW*--

"-- I COULDN'T *REST* OR *THINK* OF MY DUTIES UNTIL I FOUND OUT *WHAT!*

"SO I SET OFF IN *SEARCH* FOR YOU, LUKE--"

--AND GOT CAPTURED BY *CRIMSON JACK* INSTEAD!

BUT IF *HAN SOLO* JUST PICKS UP ON THE *HINTS* I GAVE... THE SEARCH WILL STILL GO *ON*, LUKE! IT *MUST!*

MEANWHILE, ON THE HUGE SPACECRAFT'S **BRIDGE**...

THIS **DREXEL** SYSTEM IS LITTLE MORE THAN A **NAME** TO ME, SOLO... AND OUR **CHART PRINT-OUTS** DON'T HAVE MUCH DATA EITHER.

YOU'VE BEEN WORKING THE SAME SECTORS **TOO LONG**, JACK... MAKES FOR COMFORTABLE **PIRATING** BUT NARROWS YOUR VIEW OF THE **UNIVERSE**.

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SPACE-HOPPING FORCES US TO KEEP A MUCH MORE **DETAILED** SET OF CHARTS ABOARD THE **FALCON**.

WURFLE

OKAY TO HAVE **CHEWIE** TAP IN OUR COMPUTER-SYSTEM WITH YOURS SO WE CAN **DRAW** ON THEM?

SO LONG AS YOUR HIRSUTE FIRST MATE DOESN'T MIND AN **ESCORT**... OR THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING **SLAIN** BY THEM IF HE TRIES ANYTHING **SUSPICIOUS!**

GROWF!

NO **PROBLEM**, JACK. AS CHEWIE SAYS--

--WHAT'S THE FUN IN BEING **PARTNERS** IF YOU CAN'T **TRUST** ONE ANOTHER?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE **WOOKIEE**, JACK... HE'LL ONLY DO WHAT HE'S **SUPPOSED** TO.

MEANTIME, LET ME GET STARTED ON THE **PRELIMINARY** COMPUTATIONS. IT'S A **LONG HOP** TO THE DREXEL SYSTEM--

--AND IT'S ONE OF THE *FEW* PLACES IN THIS GALAXY I'VE NEVER *BEEN* BEFORE! BUT WHY UPSET MY RED-BEARDED BUDDY WITH *THAT* TIDBIT OF INFORMATION?

OR THE FACT THAT ANY STAR-FARING OLD-TIMER I EVER *TALKED* TO SAID IT'S A SPOT TO BE AVOIDED LIKE A *BLACK HOLE!*

I DON'T KNOW WHAT LUKE SKYWALKER IS *DOING* THERE... BUT THE *PRINCESS* CERTAINLY SET THINGS UP SO WE'RE *ALL* ABOUT TO FIND OUT!

YEAH, KID! *WHEREVER* YOU ARE AND WHATEVER *MESS* YOU'RE IN--

"--YOU'RE ABOUT TO HAVE *LOTS* OF *COMPANY!*"

ARTOO! THREEPIO! BACK INSIDE THE *SHIP!* THE CHARGE IN MY BLASTER HAS GOTTEN TOO *WEAK*--

--THESE SHOTS WON'T *STOP* IT!

VEEBREEP!

YOU *HEARD* MASTER LUKE, ARTOO DETOO--

--I'M QUITE SURE HE'S ALREADY *AWARE* THE SHIP IS SINKING!

IT'LL BE *AFLOAT* LONGER THAN *WE* WILL IF THAT MONSTER *STRIKES!* *MOVE* YOU TWO--

THAT THING'S GETTING LESS *SHY* WITH EVERY *BLAST* AND--

THAT'S IT! THE CHARGE HAS RUN *OUT!*

QUICKLY, MASTER LUKE! THE UGLY CREATURE IS MAKING ITS--

WHA-LOM!

--*MOVE!*

GOT THAT EMERGENCY HATCH FASTENED JUST IN *TIME*--!

BUT IF *THAT* BLOW DIDN'T CRACK THE SHIP IN TWO, THE *NEXT* ONE *WILL!*

FUWEET!

WHAT DO YOU *MEAN* 'THIS WAY,' ARTOO? IS YOUR INTEGRATED LOGIC TERMINAL SCREWED ON *BACKWARDS?*

OBVIOUSLY THE WATER IS *DEEPER* IN THAT DIRECTION! IF THERE'S ONE THING I HATE MORE THAN *SPACE TRAVEL*--

--IT'S *SWIMMING!*

I THINK I KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO, THREEPIO. FOLLOW HIM!

EXACTLY AS I WAS ABOUT TO SUGGEST, SIR! MAY AS WELL HUMOR THE STUBBORN LITTLE DROID--

--MAKE HIS LAST MOMENTS BEFORE SHORT-CIRCUITING HAPPY ONES AND--

ARTOO! NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

HE'S OPENING THE LIFE POD CHAMBER! INSIDE... BEFORE IT FLOODS!

THINGS ARE HAPPENING ENTIRELY TOO FAST FOR MY COMPREHENSION REACTORS!

ONE MOMENT WE'RE SAFELY ORBITING THIS PLANET... THE NEXT, ALL SYSTEMS GO DEAD AND WE CRASH-GLIDE INTO SEEMINGLY ENDLESS OCEAN...! THEN THAT CREATURE--

SEAL THE SAFETY DOOR, ARTOO! AND PRAY THIS POD CAN STILL--

--EJECT!

CHONG!

AND LONG MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE POD HAS BOBBED TO THE SURFACE...

CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING, MASTER LUKE?

THE END OF OUR SPACECRAFT, THREEPIO! THAT KING-SIZE WATERWORM IS ABOUT TO APPLY THE FINISHING TOUCHES!

AT LEAST WE PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US SO THAT-- WAIT A MINUTE!

OH, DEAR! DON'T TELL ME THERE'S **NEW DANGER**, SIR!

I DON'T KNOW **WHAT** TO THINK.

THE THING **STOPPED**... LOOKED AROUND AS THOUGH IT HAD HEARD SOME **SOUND**...OR **SIGNAL**...

THOSE GREAT SLIMY **BRUTES** ARE UNDER SOMEONE'S **CONTROL**?!

MASTER LUKE, WHAT **MANNER** OF WORLD ARE WE **STRANDED** UPON?!

AND **NOW**-- A **SECOND** CREATURE HAS SHOWN UP!

AND **THIS** ONE HAS A **RIDER!**

NEXT ISSUE:

DOOMWORLD!

STAR WARS™

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS™

LUKE AND THE DROIDS TRAPPED ON A...

DOOMWORLD!

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THE REBEL ALLIANCE HAS SENT LUKE SKYWALKER TO FIND A **NEW LOCATION** FOR THEIR MAIN BASE AFTER THE BATTLE OF THE **DEATH STAR**.* BUT **HERE**, ON THIS UNNAMED PLANET OF THE STAR-SUN **DREXEL**, LUKE HAS FOUND INSTEAD WHAT MAY BE FOR HIM AND THE TWO DROIDS, ARTOO-DEETOO AND SEE-THREEPIO, A...

DOOMWORLD!

IT SEEMED **NOTHING** COULD BE WORSE THAN CRASHING INTO THIS **ENDLESS OCEAN**, MASTER LUKE--

--UNTIL **THOSE** CREATURES APPEARED!

WE GOT AWAY IN THE **LIFE POD** JUST IN TIME, THREEPIO... BUT I DON'T **BELIEVE** WHAT'S HAPPENING **NOW**!

*CHRONICLED IN **STAR WARS** #6. --ARCHIE.

THE *RIDER* CONTROLLING THAT *ONE* MONSTER HAS DONE *SOMETHING* TO THE OTHER ONE TOO! IT'S NO LONGER *ATTACKING* OUR SHIP... IT'S *PUSHING* IT!

I KNOW IT'S *FANTASTIC*, THREEPIO, B-BUT... I THINK THEY'RE OUT TO *SALVAGE* OUR SPACECRAFT!

OH, DEAR! IS THAT *GOOD* OR *BAD* AS FAR AS WE'RE--

EXCUSE ME, SIR. *ARTOO* IS RAISING SOME SORT OF *COMMOTION*.

FLWEEET

HE CLAIMS HIS *SENSORS* ARE DETECTING SOME SORT OF *MECHANIZED CRAFT* IN THE AREA.

FRANKLY, MASTER LUKE, I THINK SPLASHING AROUND IN THE *WATER* BEFORE WE ABANDONED SHIP* MAY HAVE CORRODED HIS *PERCEPTION FILAMENTS* BECAUSE I DON'T DETECT--

WAIT, THREEPIO! *BEHIND* US... ON THE *HORIZON*...

HYDRA-CRAFT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE *CALLED* HERE... BUT THEY'RE SKIMMING OVER THE *WATER* JUST LIKE I USED TO WHIP AROUND TATOOINE IN MY OLD *LANDSPEEDER*!

BEGGING YOUR *PARDON*, SIR, BUT ISN'T THAT A RATHER *AWKWARD* ANALOGY--

*LAST ISSUE -- ARCH.

--SINCE THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO **BE** ANY LAND?

WHATEVER THEY ARE, THREEPIO, THEY'RE **ARMED**--

--AND **OPENING FIRE** ON THOSE SEA MONSTERS WITH **US** CAUGHT IN THE **MIDDLE!**

THE AIR IS FILLED WITH THE WHINE AND CRACKLE OF **LASER BOLTS...**

...AS THE MONSTER'S **RIDER** WAVES HIS STRANGE **STAFF** ALOFT, NO NOTICEABLE SOUND OR SIGNAL ISSUES FROM IT...

YET BOTH HIS SER-PENTINE **STEED...**

...AND ITS DRAGON-LIKE COUNTERPART RESPOND AS IMMEDIATELY AS IF **SPURRED!**

FOR A MOMENT, THEY ARE **LOST** IN THE WINE-DARK DEPTHS. **THEN**, AS THEIR ARMED ATTACKERS SURGE STEADILY FORWARD...

KHA-LUD!

BUT THE TWO **OTHER** CRAFTS ARE NOT SO EASILY **CAUGHT**. WHEELING SHARPLY IN THE FOAMING WATERS, THEY BRING THEIR **GUNS** TO BEAR!

CIRCLE THE MISERABLE SEA SPAWN! HE'S GONNA *PAY* FOR WIPIN' OUT THAT *HYDRA-SKIMMER!*

CATCH 'IM IN A *CROSSFIRE!*

AN' KEEP A *SHARP EYE* OUT FOR--

--THE *DRAGON LORD!!*

YET EVEN AS THE SERPENT RIDER SWAMPS THE **SECOND** SKIMMER...

...HIS REPTILIAN **MOUNT** COMES INTO THE LINE OF SEARING LASER FIRE FROM THE **THIRD!**

WE'VE **GOT** 'IM! A FEW MORE BLASTS AN' HE'S **DONE!**

BUT THE RIDER DOESN'T **WAIT** FOR THAT. WITH THE TWO WOUNDED CREATURES AT HIS COMMAND...HE **RETREATS.**

STOP **FIRIN'!** THEY'RE OUT OF **RANGE!** RUNNIN' OFF LIKE WHIPPED **WOMP RATS!**

SOME WHIPPIN'... COST US **TWO SKIMMERS** AN' WE GOT **NOTHIN'** TO SHOW FOR IT!

DON'T BE SO **CERTAIN!** THE BIG PRIZE MAY HAVE **SUNK...** BUT **SOMETHING'S** BOBBIN' ABOUT OUT THERE.

AND IT'S **GLEAMIN'** LIKE METAL!

METAL?!

SHOOT OUT THE **MAGNETIC GRAPPLES...** ON THE **DOUBLE!**

CHOOM!

CHOOM!

*AND AS THE GRAPPLES THUD AGAINST THE LIFE POD'S **HULL...***

THREEPIO, I THINK WE'RE **RESCUED...** LIKE IT OR NOT.

WHY IS IT, SIR, I HAVE THE FEELING IT'S GOING TO BE **NOT?**

MOMENTS LATER, THE GOLDEN-HUED TRANSLATOR DROID'S FEELING IS PUT TO THE TEST... AS THE POD IS HAULED ONTO THE HYDRA-CRAFT.

BLAZES! THAT IRON STEW POT STILL HAS A FEW PIECES OF MEAT IN IT!

BUT...ONE OF 'EM'S WEARIN' A METAL SUIT!

THAT'S NO SUIT, FOOL! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ALL YOUR OFF-WORLD LORE--?

THE YOUNG STARHOPPER IS TRAVELIN' WITH A GENUINE ROBOT! THAT SMALLER PIECE OF NUTS AN' BOLTS BESIDE 'IM IS ONE TOO!

AN' EITHER OF 'EM HOLDS ENOUGH COMPONENTS TO MAKE THE GOVERNOR FORGIVE US THEM LOST SKIMMERS.

CHUCK THE BOY BACK TO THE FISHES--

--THEN TEAR APART THE MACHINES SO THEY DON'T CAUSE TROUBLE!

NOW WAIT A MINUTE--

I SAID WAIT!

A L-LIGHT SABER! THE BARE-FACED LITTLE PUP IS A JEDI!

VRAMM!

JEDI! EVEN IN THIS MOMENT OF DANGER, LUKE THRILLS TO THE WORD... AND WISHES IT WAS TRUE. WISHES THAT LIKE HIS FATHER, WHOSE SABER HE WIELDS, AND LIKE OBI WAN KENOBI, THE MAN WHO TRAINED HIM...

...HE TOO WAS A JEDI KNIGHT.

BUT I'M NOT...

"...BEN KENOBI WAS THE LAST OF THAT PROUD LINE. AND HE HAD BARELY STARTED TEACHING ME ABOUT THE FORCE WHEN HE FELL DUELING DARTH VADER. YET... SOMETIMES...

"...I STILL FEEL AS IF HE'S WITH ME."

AT LEAST HIS WORDS CERTAINLY ARE: "TRY TO DIVORCE YOUR ACTIONS FROM CONSCIOUS CONTROL--

ENOUGH!

"STRETCH OUT WITH YOUR FEELINGS--"

JUMP! IF THAT LASER BLADE EVEN TOUCHES YOU... YOU'RE SLICED SEA CABBAGE!

HE CAN'T SWING IT EVERY WAY AT ONCE! COME AT 'IM FAST FROM ALL SIDES!

HE'S RIGHT, ARTOO! POOR MASTER LUKE! WE'RE CERTAINLY DOOMED THIS TI--

BADEEP

ARTOO! YOU'RE LEAKING LUBRI-CANT ONTO THE DECK! SOMEONE COULD--

--SLIP!

AND BEFORE MORE OF THE SKIMMER CREW CAN MOVE IN ON HIM...

...LUKE LEAPS TOWARD THE CRAFT'S HELM!

WRAK!

ALL RIGHT! ENOUGH! ANY MORE MOVES AGAINST ME OR THE DROIDS--

--AND I USE MY LIGHT SABER TO FUSE THESE CONTROLS INTO A MOLTEN LUMP!

EASY NOW, LAD! THAT'D LEAVE US STRANDED... AT THE MERCY OF ANY DRAGON LORD WHO HAPPENED ALONG.

THEN HEAVE YOUR WEAPONS OVER THE SIDE... AND START ACTING FRIENDLY!

I WANT TO TALK TO THIS "GOVERNOR" OF YOURS--

--AND I WANT MY FRIENDS AND I IN ONE PIECE WHEN WE DO!

LUKE'S ORDER IS OBEYED SULLENLY... BUT IT IS OBEYED.

AND THE AGING CRAFT STARTS FORWARD TOWARD THE DISTANT HORIZON...

...AND WHATEVER WONDERS WAIT BEYOND IT!

MASTER LUKE... I FEAR THIS REPRESENTS MORE INPUT THAN MY COMPREHENSION CIRCUITS CAN ASSIMILATE!

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT IS EITHER, THREEPIO! BUT I'M HOPING OUR MEETING WITH THE "GOVERNOR" CAN CHANGE ALL THAT!

WHEN WE FIRST CAME WITHIN *SCANNING DISTANCE* OF THIS WATER WORLD, OUR SHIP'S INSTRUMENTS PICKED UP WHAT I *THOUGHT* WAS A LARGE *LAND MASS*--

EVIDENTLY, IT WAS... *T-THIS!*

I *RECALL*, SIR. WE HOPED IT *MIGHT* SERVE AS A NEW *REBEL BASE*--

--NOW I ONLY HOPE IT DOESN'T SERVE AS OUR *FINAL RESTING SPOT.*

BADOOP

NO, ARTOO. BY THAT I *DON'T* MEAN AN EX-TENDED *LUBRICATION BATH!*

DON'T *WORRY*, THREEPIO. I THINK I CAN TALK SOME *SENSE* INTO THE PERSON IN CHARGE.

AT LEAST... IT MAKES SENSE TO *ME.*

YOU'LL HAVE YOUR *CHANCE*, SONNY! THAT'S *GOVERNOR QUARG* WAITIN' ON THE DOCK!

BUT US SHOWIN' UP SHY *TWO SKIMMERS* AIN'T LIKELY TO HAVE 'IM IN A *RECEPTIVE MOOD!*

AND AS THE CRAFT TIES UP...

GUARDS! *SEIZE* EVERYONE ABOARD! I WANT THEM *HANGED* AS TRAITORS! IN OUR *WAR* WITH THE DRAGON LORDS--

--*MEN* ARE EX-PENDABLE. *SKIMMERS* DEFINITELY ARE *NOT!*

WAIT, YOUR HONOR--

-- JUST *LOOK* WHAT WE BROUGHT *BACK* WITH US!

ROBOTS! THEY *MORE* THAN MAKE UP FOR THOSE BROKEN DOWN *SKIMMERS* YOUR HONOR!

AYE, SIR! THEY COULDN'T HAVE *LASTED* ANOTHER MISSION *ANYWAY!*

PERHAPS, I'LL HAVE THE *MASTER MACHINE-SMITH* STRIP DOWN YOUR CATCH AND *JUDGE* ITS VALUE.

THEN I'LL DECIDE ABOUT *YOU*.

GOVERNOR QUARG, YOU'D BETTER HEAR *ME* OUT BEFORE YOU DECIDE *ANYTHING!*

I DON'T THINK THERE'S A *SOUL* ON THIS WHOLE *FLOATING MESS* OF YOURS WHO KNOWS WHAT THESE DROIDS ARE *REALLY* WORTH... AND *IN ONE PIECE!*

WELL *SAID*, SIR!

WHO IN THE THREE MOONS IS *THIS?!*

FOUND 'IM *WITH* THE ROBOTS, YOUR HONOR. HE SWINGS A *LIGHT SABER* JUST LIKE ONE'A THEM *JEDI KNIGHTS* THE HISTORIES TELL ABOUT.

THERE'S FAR *MORE* TO BEING A JEDI THAN *THAT*... OR SO MY *FATHER* ALWAYS INSISTED. HE LIKENED THEM TO *WARRIOR PRIESTS*--

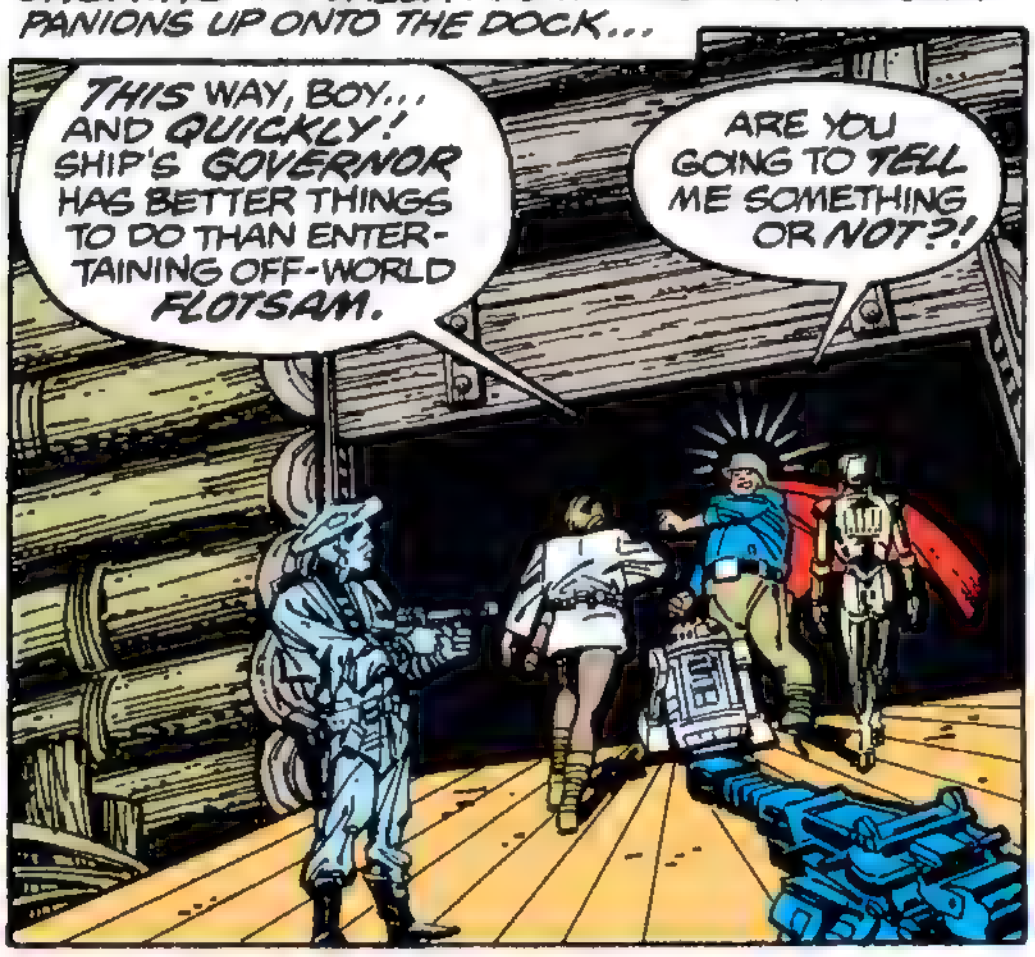
--OR *WIZARDS!* BUT, OF COURSE, HE *HATED* AND *FEARED* THEM TOO!

I'M NOT A *FOOL* LIKE FATHER, MY RUDE YOUNG FRIEND. BUT YOU'VE SPURRED MY *CURI-OUSITY* ENOUGH TO HEAR YOU OUT.

OF COURSE, IF I DON'T *LIKE* WHAT I HEAR... *YOU'LL* BE THE *FIRST ONE* HANGED.

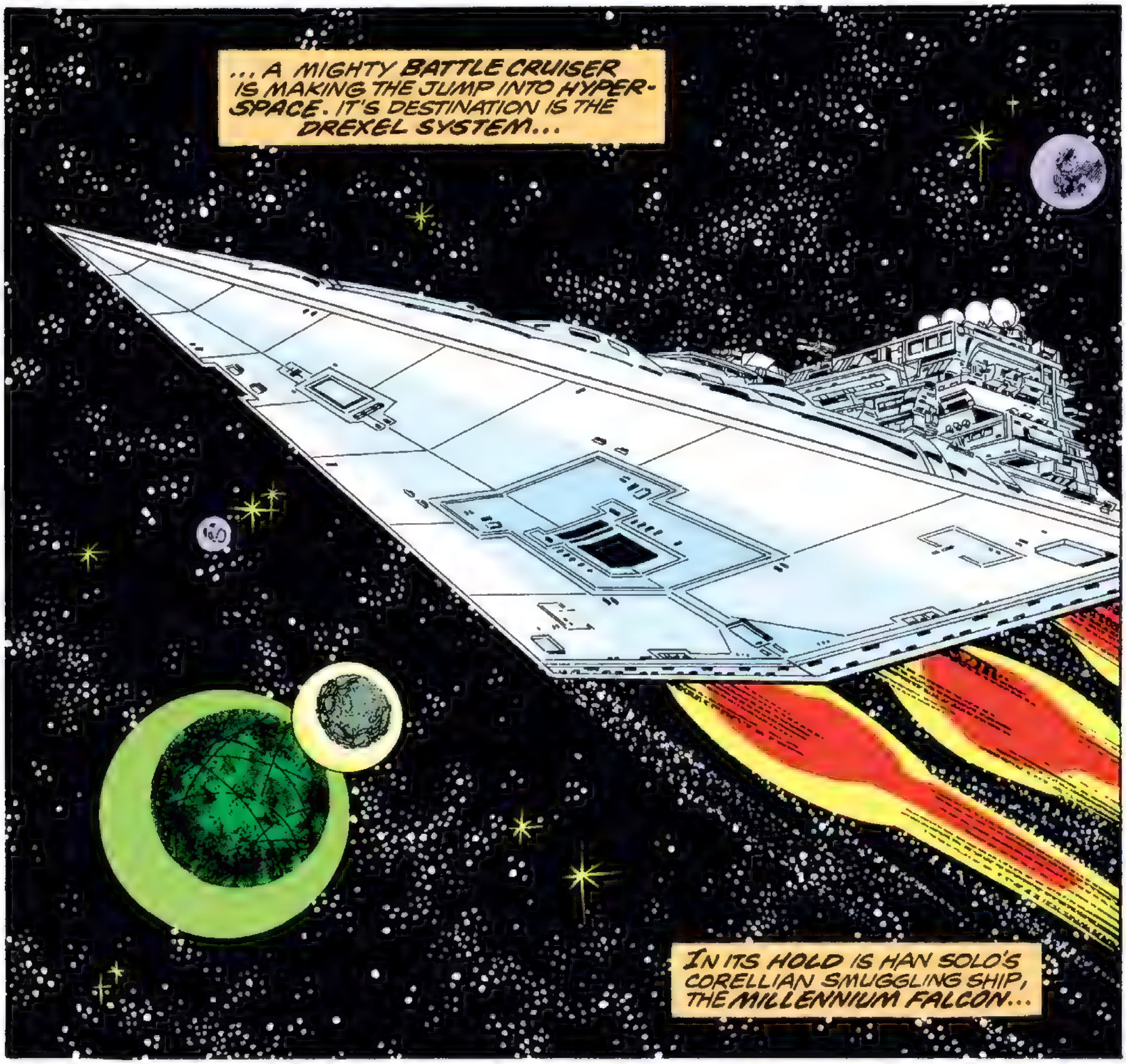
GUARDS! BRING HIM AND HIS METALLIC FRIENDS *WITH* US.

AS THE GUARDS' **BLASTERS** FOLLOW HIM, LUKE **SHEATHS** HIS SABER AND MOVES WITH HIS COMPANIONS UP ONTO THE DOCK...


THIS WAY, BOY... AND QUICKLY! SHIP'S GOVERNOR HAS BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN ENTERTAINING OFF-WORLD FLOTSAM.
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME SOMETHING OR NOT?!

BROTHER! WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE NOW FOR HAN SOLO'S GIFT OF GAB.., OR AT VERY LEAST, HIS SELF CONFIDENCE!
BETTER YET I'D LIKE TO SEE THE MILLENNIUM FALCON ROARING DOWN TO BLAST US OUT OF THIS!

AND CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, THAT **WISH** IS NOT SO FAR-FETCHED AS LUKE **FEELS** AS THE GREAT WOODEN DOOR SLAMS DOWN BEHIND HIM. FOR SOME **LIGHT YEARS** DISTANCE...


...A MIGHTY BATTLE CRUISER IS MAKING THE JUMP INTO HYPERSPACE. IT'S DESTINATION IS THE DREXEL SYSTEM...
IN ITS HOLD IS HAN SOLO'S CORELLIAN SMUGGLING SHIP, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...

...AND ON ITS **BRIDGE** IS HAN SOLO HIMSELF, FEELING UNCHARACTER-ISTICALLY **TENSE.**

HOW DO I GET MYSELF *INTO* SITUATIONS LIKE THIS? RUNNING A HALF-BAKED **BLUFF** ON **CRIMSON JACK**, ONE OF THE DEADLIEST **SPACE PIRATES** GOING--

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--WHILE HEADING TOWARD A **STAR SYSTEM** MOST OLD-TIMERS SAY SHOULD BE **AVOIDED** LIKE A HERD OF STAMPEDING **BANTHAS**--

--WITH THE **PRINCESS** WHO **MASTERMINDED** THIS MOVE LOCKED BELOW DECKS WAITING TO BE **RESCUED!**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE **GOOD** OLD DAYS WHEN I WAS A SIMPLE **SMUGGLER**... AND ONLY HAD TO WORRY ABOUT OUTRUNNING **EMPIRE SHIPS** AND BEING **MURDERED** BY DISGRUNTLED EMPLOYERS LIKE **JABBA THE HUT?**

PROBLEMS, MR. SOLO--?

I'D **HATE** TO THINK MY NEW **PARTNER** HAS ANYTHING ON HIS MIND HE'S NOT **SHARING** WITH ME.

WELL, I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOUR **FEELINGS**, JACK, BUT THIS TAIL-HEAVY **BATTLE-WAGON**--

--GOES INTO **WARP** WITH ALL THE GRACE OF A VERULLIAN **LAND SLUG.**

IT HAS THE SIZE AND FIRE-POWER TO DO ALL I REQUIRE, MR. SOLO--

--THOUGH I WILL ADMIT IT SAW SOME RATHER **HARD SERVICE** JUST BEFORE I **ACQUIRED** IT FROM THE **IMPERIAL FLEET.**

QUITE AN **ACCOMP-LISHMENT,** JACK... HOW **DID** YOU PULL THAT OFF?

"BY BEING IN THE RIGHT **PLACE** AT THE RIGHT **TIME,** SOLO.. SHORTLY **AFTER** THE REBEL ALLIANCE WON THEIR FIRST BIG **VICTORY** OVER EMPIRE FORCES. THERE WERE MANY **CASUAL-TIES...**

"...AND THIS CRUISER WAS **ONE** OF THEM. SHE APPARENTLY **ESCAPED** THE MAIN BATTLE... ONLY TO DRIFT HELPLESSLY WHEN HER **REACTORS** WENT OUT.

"WHICH IS WHEN **ME** AND **MINE** HAPPENED UPON HERE!

"THEY MANAGED TO PUT A TRIO OF **TIE FIGHTERS** INTO DESPERATE ACTION AGAINST US...

"BUT IT WAS A LAST DITCH **EFFORT**... AND MY LADS WERE **UP** TO THE CHALLENGE.

"THE EARLIER COMBAT HAD TAKEN OUT MOST OF HER **CREW.** WE BOARDED TO **LIGHT RESISTANCE,** INTENDING TO SCAVAGE AND RUN. THEN I STARTED **NOTICING...**

"THERE WAS A **LOT** OF DAMAGE, BUT MUCH OF IT WAS **SUPERFICIAL.** AND **THAT** SET ME THINKING..."

"WHY ABANDON HER, IF SHE COULD BE RECLAIMED INSTEAD?" JACK, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE IT... A PIRATE WITH VISION!

BUT THE COST--! EVEN FOR A MAN MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL AT HIS TRADE LIKE YOU.

I FOUND BACKERS, MY BOY... WILLING TO COME IN FOR A SHARE IN FUTURE PROFITS.

THEN... YOU'RE PRACTICALLY A CORPORATION! IMPRESSIVE... BUT WHERE'S THE ROMANCE?

I'LL LEAVE THAT TO STAR-HOPPERS LIKE YOURSELF, MR. SOLO. I'VE AMBITIONS BEYOND BEING A PIRATE--

AND THAT REBEL TREASURY YOU'RE LEADING US TO IN THE DREXEL SYSTEM WILL BE A NICE SHORT CUT TOWARD REAL-IZING THEM.

LET'S HOPE YOU NEVER FIND OUT THAT PARTIC-ULAR SHORT CUT IS A FIGMENT OF PRINCESS LEIA'S IMAGINATION!

CAP'N! CAP'N!

THERE'S TROUBLE ON THE OBSERVATION DECK, SIR! JOLLI'S GONE CRAZY!

JOLLI?! WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO THAT BLOOD-THIRSTY LITTLE SPITFIRE NOW?

YOU WORTHLESS BAG OF NEBULA DUST! I'LL FRY YOU FOR DARING TO LAY A HAND ON ME!

BACK OFF, WOMAN! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STARTED THE TALK ABOUT KISSIN'--

ME AN' MY MATES JUST TRIED TO OBLIGE!

ENOUGH, GIRL! WHAT IN THE CIVILIZED SYSTEMS DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

COOKING A SPACE APE! JUST BECAUSE A PERSON TALKS ABOUT SOMETHING DOESN'T MEAN SHE'S READY TO GO AT IT!

ANYWAY IT'S THAT PRINCESS LEIA'S FAULT! SHE'S THE ONE WHO SET ME THINKIN' WITH ALL OF HER BLATHER ABOUT... ABOUT...

ABOUT WHAT, JOLLI...?

WAP!

ABOUT YOU AND HOW WELL YOU KISS, YOU CORRELLIAN CLOWN!

FIRST THE PRINCESS LAYS INTO YOU*... AND NOW, JOLLI. WHAT IS THIS POWER YOU HAVE OVER WOMEN, MR. SOLO?

I DON'T KNOW... BUT I HOPE I LOSE IT SOON!

* LAST ISSUE --ARCHIE.

MEANWHILE, IN THE COCKPIT OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, AT REST IN THE CRUISER'S HOLD, A CERTAIN ONE HUNDRED YEAR OLD WOOKIEE FINISHES HIS ASSIGNED TASK...

ORRK!

WHAT'S HE MEAN BY THAT?

I DUNNO... BUT I DON'T WANNA ARGUE WITH HIM.

YEAH! GUARDIN' HIM AIN'T MY IDEA OF FUN EITHER! IF HE'S DONE WITH THAT COMPUTER TAP JACK WANTED, LET'S GO!

AND SOMETIME LATER ON CRIMSON JACK'S BRIDGE... INSTRUMENT LIGHTS BEGIN TO FLASH!

TIME TO DROP INTO SUB-LIGHT SPEED, MR. SOLO.

NOW WE'LL SEE HOW ACCURATE THOSE CHARTS ARE THAT YOU HAD FED INTO OUR COMPUTER FROM THE FALCON'S.

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THERE YOU ARE, JACK! DREXEL...! AND IT'S ONE PLANET.

NOBODY KEEPS MORE DETAILED CHARTS THAN AN OLD STAR-ROVER LIKE ME.

NOT SO FAST, "PARTNER!" SOMETHING'S WRONG!

ACCORDING TO OUR SCANNERS... THAT'S A WATER WORLD! THE REBELS COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE A TREASURY THERE!

WELL, SOLO...? I'M WAITING TO HEAR ABOUT THIS... BUT NOT VERY LONG.

JACK...! EVERYTHING'S OKAY.

JUST GET THE PRINCESS UP HERE AND I'LL PROVE THAT TO YOU.

OR DIE TRYING...!

NEXT ISSUE: DAY OF THE DRAGON LORDS!

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS™

MASTER LUKE, THIS TIME WE DON'T DARE LET THE WOOKIEE WIN!

BYRNE AUSTIN

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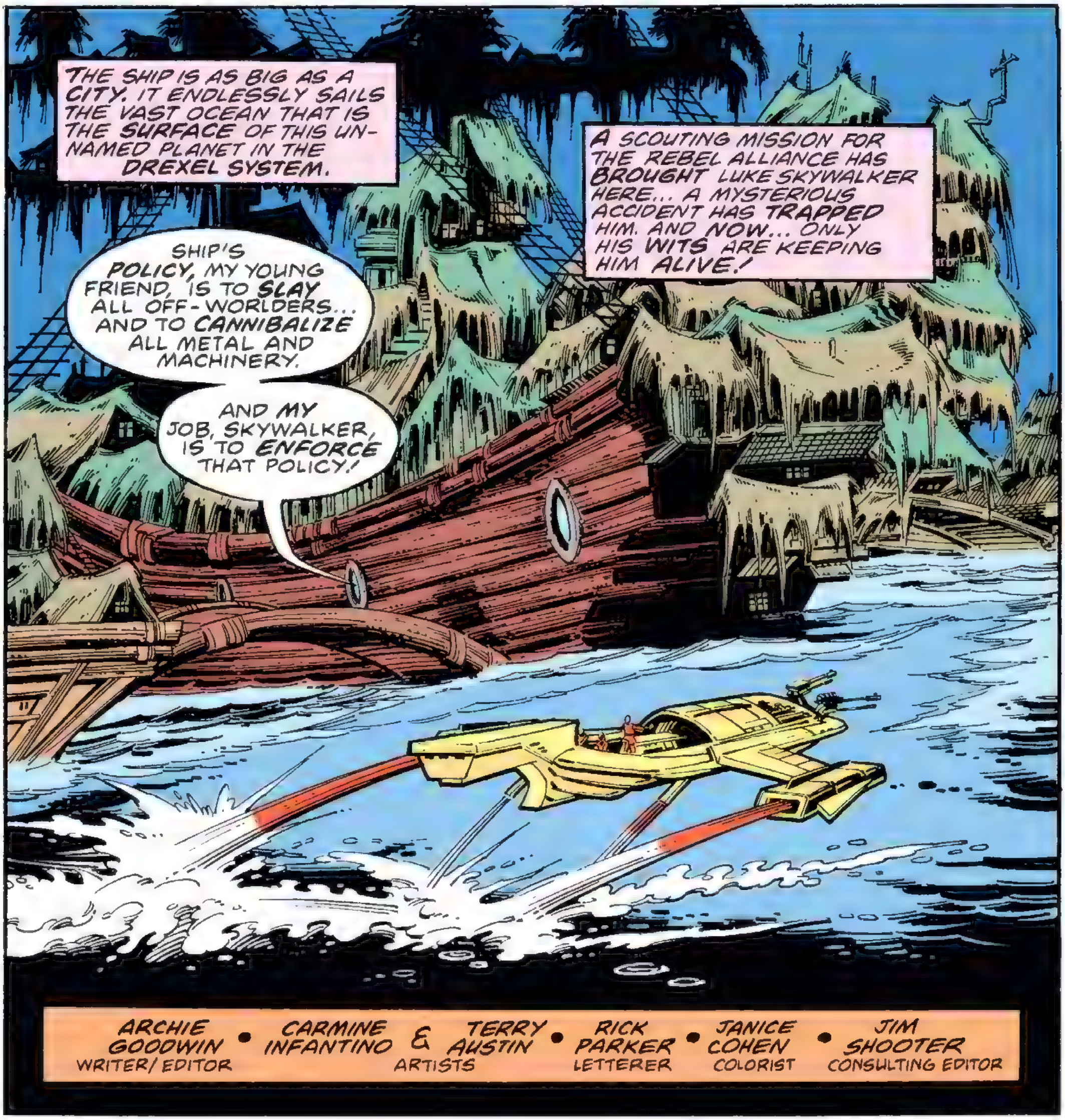
DAY OF THE DRAGON LORDS!


THE SHIP IS AS BIG AS A CITY. IT ENDLESSLY SAILS THE VAST OCEAN THAT IS THE SURFACE OF THIS UNNAMED PLANET IN THE DREXEL SYSTEM.
A SCOUTING MISSION FOR THE REBEL ALLIANCE HAS BROUGHT LUKE SKYWALKER HERE... A MYSTERIOUS ACCIDENT HAS TRAPPED HIM. AND NOW... ONLY HIS WITS ARE KEEPING HIM ALIVE!
SHIP'S POLICY, MY YOUNG FRIEND, IS TO SLAY ALL OFF-WORLDERS... AND TO CANNIBALIZE ALL METAL AND MACHINERY.
AND MY JOB, SKYWALKER, IS TO ENFORCE THAT POLICY!

ARCHIE GOODWIN • WRITER/EDITOR
CARMINE INFANTINO & TERRY AUSTIN • ARTISTS
RICK PARKER • LETTERER
JANICE COHEN • COLORIST
JIM SHOOTER • CONSULTING EDITOR

GOVERNOR QUARG, I'VE BEEN *TRYING* TO EXPLAIN THAT THIS R2-D2 DROID IS ONE OF THE GREATEST *REPAIR UNITS* EVER CREATED!

JUST *LOOK* HOW HE'S DOING WITH THAT HYDRA-SKIMMER YOUR OWN *MASTER MACHINESMITH* SAYS SHOULD BE *JUNKED!*

IMPRESSIVE, SKYWALKER. AND FOR ME TO *OVERRIDE* SHIP'S POLICY--

--THIS DEMONSTRATION HAD BEST *CONTINUE* THAT WAY!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND, ARTOO? YOUR WORK WILL DETERMINE IF WE CONTINUE SERVICE AS PROPER ROBOTS--

--OR *END* IT AS BAILING BUCKETS, FISH HOOKS... OR *WORSE!*

ER... MASTER LUKE? THE LITTLE DROID DOESN'T SEEM TO *GRASP* THE SITUATION.

HE *CLAIMS*-- EXCEPT FOR ASSEMBLAGE-- TO BE *FINISHED!* BUT OBVIOUSLY SEVERAL *DAYS*-- A *WEEK* PERHAPS-- WILL BE NEEDED TO--

I WANT THAT *SKIMMER* SLAPPED TOGETHER AND IN THE WATER FOR A *TEST*... *IMMEDIATELY!*

AND MUCH **SOONER** THAN SEE-THREEPIO WOULD PREFER, THE HASTILY REPAIRED SEA-CRAFT BOBS IN THE WAVES OFF THE SPRAWLING CITY-SHIP'S **STERN**... WITH **LUKE** AT ITS HELM!

WE'RE AT WAR WITH THE **DRAGON LORDS**, SKYWALKER, IF YOU AND THESE DROIDS CAN MAKE A WORTHLESS SKIMMER **COMBAT READY**... YOUR FUTURES ARE **SECURE**!

THAT FLOAT ON THE HORIZON IS YOUR **TARGET**... SINK IT AND I'LL BE QUITE **SATISFIED**.

SOUNDS EASY. BUT MECHANICS AND MAINTENANCE SURE AREN'T THESE PEOPLE'S **STRONG POINT**! I COULD TELL BY THE WAY THEIR SKIMMERS **PERFORMED** WHILE BATTLING THOSE SEA-DRAGONS.*

LET'S HOPE THIS OVERNIGHT WATER WAGON ISN'T **TOO FAR GONE** FOR ARTOO'S REPAIRS TO **HOLD UP**!

*LAST ISSUE--ARCHIE.

BUT WHATEVER **PROBLEMS** AWAIT... **STARTING** ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

WELL, AT LEAST YOU GOT **THAT** MUCH RIGHT, ARTOO! BUT FRANKLY, I FEEL YOUR **RESETTING** OF THE **LASER CANNON FEED SYSTEM** WAS DONE FAR TOO **SWIFTLY** AND --

WEE

DOOP

BEET

NAME-CALLING DOES NOT MAKE IT ANY LESS TRUE.

THAT FLOAT IS A **SOLID MASS** OF LOGS! FULLY-FUNCTIONING **LASERS** COULD STILL SLICE 'EM LIKE **BUTTER**--

--BUT THESE CANNONS OBVIOUSLY HAVEN'T BEEN **FULLY**-FUNCTIONING FOR **YEARS**!

ARTOO'S REPAIRS WILL **HELP**... BUT IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME BEGGAR'S CANYON STYLE **SHARP-SHOOTING** TO GET THE JOB DONE!

I'LL CIRCLE ONCE TO PICK OUT THE **KEY STRESS POINTS**, THEN--

THEN YOU'LL BE DEAD, BOY!

AN' I WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT SOME BAREFACED OFF-WORLDER AND A COUPLE OF MECHANICALS REPLACIN' ME AS MASTER MACHINESMITH!

CORDED MUSCLES TIGHTEN AGAINST LUKE'S THROAT, CUTTING OFF AIR, THE FLOW OF BLOOD...

CAN'T STOP HIM...! HE'S TOO BIG... TOO STRONG...! I'VE HAD IT... UNLESS...

THE ONE-TIME MOISTURE-FARMER-NOW-STAR-WARRIOR KICKS OUT AT THE SKIMMER'S CONTROLS...

...AND MISSES!

LUKE'S VISION BLURS. HIS MIND REELS. HE DESPERATELY KICKS AGAIN...

...AND CONNECTS WITH THE SWITCH FOR THE BRAKING JETS! FOR THE FORWARD-SPEEDING SKIMMER... IT'S LIKE HITTING A WALL!

LUKE IS PREPARED FOR THE RESULT...

...THE MASTER MACHINESMITH ISN'T!

BUT LUKE HAS NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT HIS JETTISONED FOE... AS HE FIGHTS TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE WILDLY TUMBLING CRAFT!

STRAIN'S TEARING THIS BUCKET OF BOLTS APART! GOTTA THROW ALL THE POWER INTO THE STARBOARD REPULSOR TURBO--!

THAT'LL EITHER STRAIGHTEN HER OUT... OR FINISH 'ER OFF!

IT IS A SITUATION WHERE SOMETHING HAS TO GIVE. AND WITH A WILD SHRIEK OF RENDING METAL... SOMETHING DOES!

CANOPY'S GONE! BUT EVERYTHING ELSE IS HOLDING... I'M BACK IN BUSINESS!

SPRAAANG!

AND THAT BUSINESS CENTERS ON A GREAT MASS OF FLOATING LOGS. SWIFTLY, LUKE TURNS THE HYDRA-SKIMMER--AND ITS LASER-CANNONS--TO THE TASK!

VRAK-KOW!

GUNS STILL DON'T PACK THE PUNCH THEY SHOULD... WOULDN'T WANT TO GO UP AGAINST IMPERIAL STORMTROOPERS WITH 'EM...

BUT CONSIDERING WHAT HE HAD TO WORK WITH... ARTOO DID JUST FINE!

AN OPINION SHARED BY GOVERNOR QUARG...

CONGRATULATIONS, SKYWALKER! YOU'VE WON A DEFINITE PLACE ON THE SHIP.

IF YOU AND YOUR DROIDS CONTINUE TO PERFORM AS I'VE WITNESSED... YOU'LL BE MASTER MACHINESMITH FOR A LIFETIME.

SIR, I DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE ANYONE ELSE'S JOB... JUST TO PROVE THAT THREEPIO, ARTOO, AND I COULD BE OF SERVICE--

--SO THAT IN TIME, YOU MIGHT HELP US GET OFF THIS WORLD.

LET'S GET YOUR MECHANICAL FRIENDS GETTLED, MY BOY... THEN I'LL EXPLAIN SOME THINGS.

AND SOON, IN ONE OF THE SPRAWLING SHIP'S MANY CHAMBERS...

YES, WE WERE LONG OVERDUE FOR A LUBRICATION BATH, ARTOO.

THOUGH I MUST ADMIT, THIS PARTICULAR LUBRICANT DOES STRANGELY AFFECT MY OLFACTORY SENSORS!

NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD, ROBOT. THAT OIL IS EXTRACTED FROM THE FINEST FISH ON THIS PLANET.

NO DOUBT THE SMELL IS AN ACQUIRED PERCEPTION, SIR. IN TIME, I'LL--

AWAY! SHOO! SCAT!

HERE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU REPULSIVE LITTLE CREATURE?!

IT'S A LIZARD! THEY LIKE FISH. HARMLESS NUISANCES--

--BUT THEY SWARM OVER OUR VESSEL LIKE BARNACLES! THERE'S MUCH ABOUT SHIPBOARD LIFE FOR YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS TO LEARN, SKYWALKER.

BUT LET'S START WITH CERTAIN BASICS. COME UP ON DECK.

THERE, SKYWALKER! THE MOST BASIC LESSON OF ALL--

THE PRICE OF NOT PLEASING YOUR GOVERNOR!

THAT'S THE MASTER MACHINESMITH... THE MAN WHO ATTACKED ME!

THE ACT OF A DESPERATE FOOL... WHO SENSED HIS USEFULNESS WAS AT AN END.

HE WAS WRONG. HE'S ACTUALLY QUITE USEFUL NOW... AS A WARNING TO OTHERS!

THIS PUDGY MADMAN DOESN'T HAVE A VOICE LIKE DARTH VADER... BUT HIS HEART'S SURE IN THE SAME PLACE!

GOT TO KEEP MY TEMPER... APPEAR TO GO ALONG WITH HIM UNTIL THE DROIDS AND I CAN FIND SOME WAY TO ESCAPE!

YOU'RE SILENT, BOY... IMPRESSED, I TAKE IT. GOOD!

I'M BREAKING A RULE TO LET YOU SURVIVE... I DON'T WANT ANY BETRAYALS.

THAT RULE WAS MADE BY MY FATHER AND HIS GENERATION WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO THIS WORLD OF WATER ...FLEEING THE REPUBLIC!

THE REPUBLIC...! THE OLD REPUBLIC...! I-IT'S JUST A MEMORY NOW... REPLACED BY THE EMPIRE!

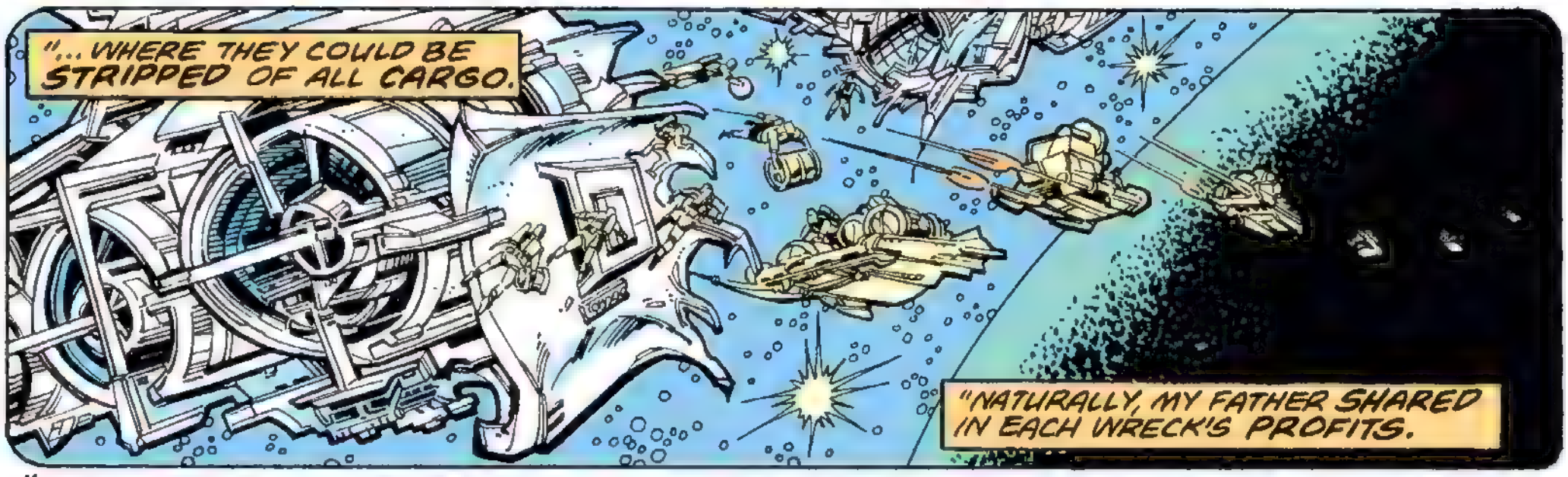
THEN WHATEVER HELL DEAR FATHER'S IN, HE MUST BE PLEASED--

"...HE NEVER QUITE FORGAVE THE REPUBLIC FOR ENDING HIS RATHER PROFITABLE GOVERNORSHIP.

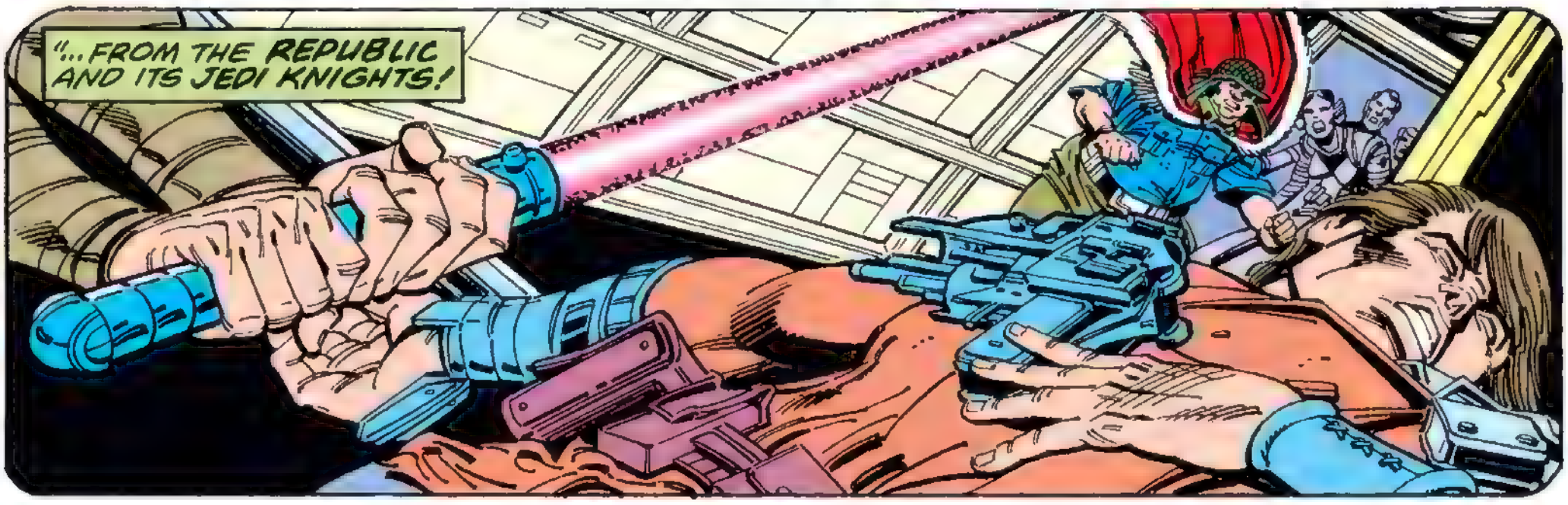
"FATHER GOVERNED THE KORTEEN ASTEROID BELT, USING HIS AUTHORITY TO COVER HIS CITIZENS' PARTIALLY TO...

"...SPACE-WRECKING!

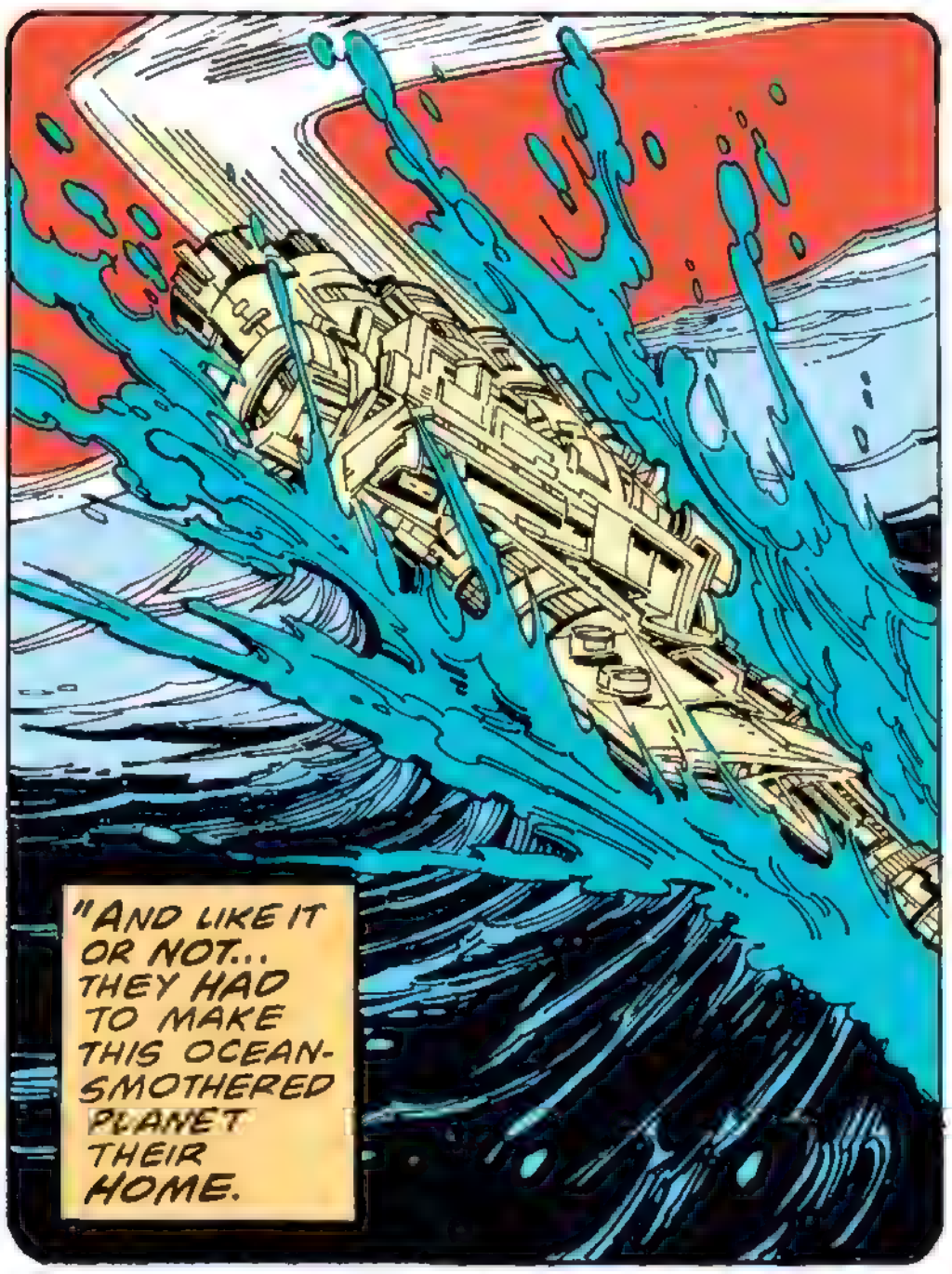
"THE BELT'S DENIZENS, SUPPOSEDLY MINERS, USED **SONIC JAMMING DEVICES** TO DISRUPT STARSHIP DRIVES AND SEND THE HELPLESS CRAFTS **CRASHING** INTO THE ASTEROIDS...

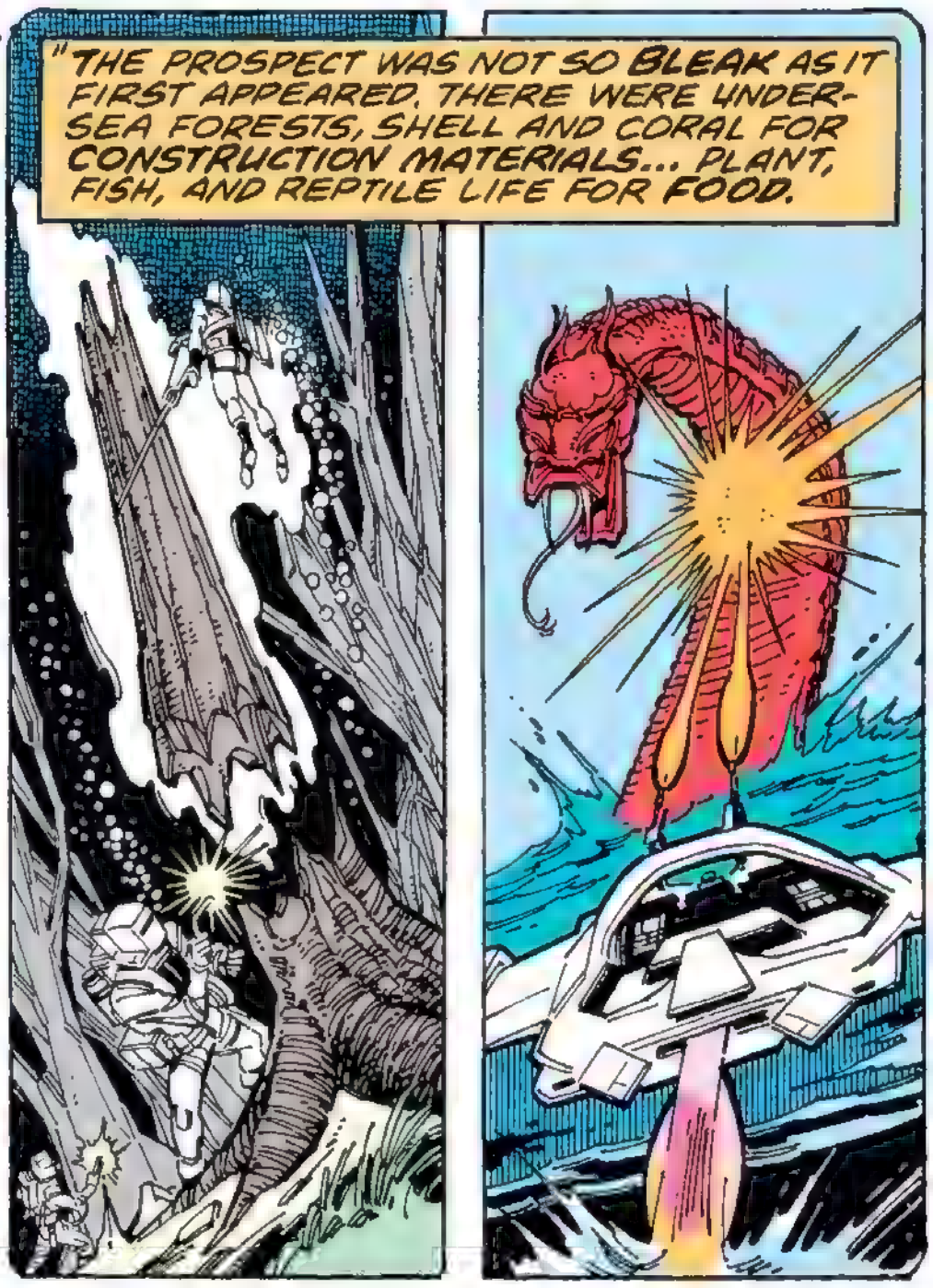


"AND LUST FOR EVEN **MORE** OF THOSE PROFITS LED TO DEVELOPMENT OF MORE POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE **JAMMERS**. BUT THE INFLUX OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICIANS NEEDED TO **ACCOMPLISH** THIS IN TIME ATTRACTED **OTHER** INTEREST...



"FATHER AND A BAND OF FOLLOWERS **ESCAPED**.. IF TUMBLING OUT OF WARP IN A LASER-BLASTED SPACECRAFT AND LIMPING INTO THE **DREXEL** SYSTEM CAN PROPERLY BE **CALLED** ESCAPE.




"THE PROSPECT WAS NOT SO **BLEAK** AS IT FIRST APPEARED. THERE WERE UNDERSEA FORESTS, SHELL AND CORAL FOR **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS**... PLANT, FISH, AND REPTILE LIFE FOR **FOOD**.

"ONLY **METAL**, VITAL TO MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS, WAS **MISSING**...

"...BUT **WRECKERS** THAT THEY WERE, MY FATHER AND THOSE ORIGINAL SETTLERS MANAGED TO ACQUIRE EVEN **THAT**...THOUGH NEVER IN SUFFICIENT **QUANTITY**. AND FOR US, METAL **REMAINS** MORE PRECIOUS THAN GEMS!

"EVEN SO, AROUND THE REMNANTS OF THEIR ORIGINAL SPACECRAFT, THIS **SHIP** GREW AND THRIVED...

"...EXCEPT FOR **TWO FACTORS!** MOUNTING **ATTACKS** FROM THE GREAT **SEA-DRAGONS**...

"...AND A **REVOLT** BY THE SHIP'S **TECHNICIANS!** THEY CLAIMED WRECKER **POLICIES** WERE SOMEHOW **CAUSING** THE DRAGON'S ATTACKS!

"MY FATHER **SQUASHED** THE UPRISING, BUT--IN THE MOST **FOOLISH MOVE** OF HIS LIFE--FAILED TO **KILL** THE RING-LEADERS.

"STUPIDLY, HE SET THEM **ADRIFT**, INTENDING THAT THEY PERISH **SLOWLY** ON THE ENDLESS SEA...

"INSTEAD, THEY **SURVIVED**, TO BECOME OUR DEADLIEST ENEMY...**THE DRAGON LORDS!**

"FOR THE TECHNOS HAD DISCOVERED THAT **SOUND WAVES** AFFECT THE GREAT MONSTERS! AND WITH A DEVICE THEY CALL A **SONIC-STAFF**, THEY SEEMINGLY **CONTROL** THE CREATURES...

"...AND **DIRECT** THEM AGAINST **US!**"

SO LET'S HAVE NO TALK OF **LEAVING** THE PLANET, SKYWALKER! I **NEED** YOU AND YOUR DROIDS FOR MY **WAR**--

A WAR TO WIN **FINAL CONTROL** OF THIS WORLD ONCE AND FOR **ALL!** A WAR--

GOVERNOR QUARG! THE TRACKING CREW REPORTS SOMETHING **BIG** IS ON THE WAY--

--BIGGER THAN WE'VE **EVER** ENCOUNTERED, YOUR HONOR!

REACHING THE TRACKING CREW INVOLVES A DESCENT TO THE SHIP'S LOWEST LEVEL...

...AND ANOTHER REVELATION FOR LUKE!

THIS IS... A SPACECRAFT SECTION! FROM THE SHIP THAT BROUGHT YOUR FATHER HERE...?!

AND THIS EQUIPMENT IS ALL PART OF THE MOST POWERFUL SONIC-JAMMER FATHER'S WRECKING PROFITS COULD BUY!

HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH IT FROM THE ASTEROID BELT... WE'VE BEEN PUTTING IT TO GOOD USE EVER SINCE!

Y-YOU'RE STILL WRECKERS!

THIS IS HOW MY SHIP WAS BROUGHT DOWN!

YOURS... AND ALL OTHERS THAT STRAY INTO THE DREXEL SYSTEM.

PERHAPS NOT THIS TIME, SIR! THE THING THAT WE'RE GETTIN' EARLY READINGS ON COULD BE BIG AS WE ARE!

THEN WE'LL SALVAGE METAL ENOUGH TO LAST A LIFETIME, FOOL! STRIKE THE MOMENT IT'S IN RANGE!

I ONLY KNOW OF ONE CRAFT THAT LARGE... AN IMPERIAL CRUISER!

"BUT WHAT WOULD BRING AN EMPIRE WARSHIP INTO AN OUT OF THE WAY SYSTEM LIKE THIS...?"

ANSWER: GREED! THE GREED OF A RED-BEARDED SPACE PIRATE NAMED CRIMSON JACK, WHO LONG AGO 'LIBERATED' THIS CRUISER FROM IMPERIAL HANDS... *

...AND WHO NOW SUSPECTS THAT HIS GREED HAS ALLOWED A CERTAIN CORRELLIAN SMUGGLER TO SOMEHOW PLAY HIM FOR A FOOL!

A WATER WORLD! THE REBEL ALLIANCE COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE THEIR TREASURY THERE, SOLO!

RELAX YOUR TRIGGER FINGER, JACK! I'M GOING TO PROVE HOW WRONG YOU ARE--

*AS EXPLAINED IN DETAIL LAST ISSUE--ARCHIE.

-- JUST AS SOON AS YOUR LITTLE HELPER, JOLLI, BRINGS PRINCESS LEIA HERE TO THE BRIDGE.

WHICH BUYS ME ABOUT THREE MORE MINUTES TO THINK OF SOMETHING--

-- IF JACK DOESN'T RUN OUT OF PATIENCE BEFORE THEN!

MEANWHILE, ON A LIFT COMING UP FROM THE MASSIVE SHIP'S DETENTION LEVEL...

I THINK THAT HIGH'N' MIGHTY HAN SOLO'S ABOUT TO LEARN ALL HIS CHARM AN' SMOOTH TALK WON'T HELP HIM MUCH LONGER!

JOLLI, HAVE YOU EVEN CONSIDERED THAT SOMETIMES WHEN WE SEEM TO HATE SOMEONE--

--IT'S TO HIDE THE FACT THAT WE'RE REALLY ATTRACTED TO THEM?

WHAT?! THE ONLY THING I'M CONSIDERING IS USING THIS BLASTER IF YOU KEEP TALKING LIKE THAT!

NOW MOVE! CAP'N JACK DOESN'T WANT TO ORBIT SOME BALL OF WATER FOREVER WAITING AROUND!

WE'RE IN ORBIT...? THEN HE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR LONG--

AND EVEN AS PRINCESS LEIA IS SPEAKING...

CAP'N.! NOW THAT THE PLANET'S ROTATED MORE... THE SCANNERS ARE PICKING UP SOMETHING BESIDES WATER!

IT TAKES A BIG MAN TO ADMIT HE'S WRONG, JACK... BUT I BET YOU CAN DO IT TOO!

SEEMS TO BE AN ISLAND OR--

SHUT UP, SOLO! I WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT--

BUT WHAT CRIMSON JACK HEARS NEXT IS THE SOUND OF CHAOS... AS SOMETHING GRABS HIS SHIP AND SHAKES IT!

WE'RE LOSING POWER! ALL SYSTEMS FAILING! INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY!

EMERGENCY POWER CUTS IN... AND THE HUGE CRUISER BEGINS TO FIGHT THE FORCE ATTACKING IT!

JACK AND HIS LADS ARE GOING TO BE PRETTY BUSY, CHEWIE! I SUGGEST WE GET OUT OF THEIR WAY--

--AS FAR AS THE MILLENIUM FALCON CAN TAKE US!

RO-WRP!

THE PRINCESS? YEAH, YEAH... I SUPPOSE WE'LL HAVE TO PULL HER FEATHERS OUT OF THE FIRE AS USUAL!

LET'S HOPE THIS WEIRD ATTACK HASN'T LEFT HER WANDERING IN HYSTERICS.

ONLY AS FAR AS SOME UNCONSCIOUS GUARDS... IN CASE SOMEONE ELSE FORGOT TO GRAB WEAPONS!

BUT OF COURSE, I SUSPECTED SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN... AND WAS PREPARED TO DITCH JOLLI WHEN IT DID!

NOW LET'S GET TO YOUR SHIP FAST! IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WAY!

Y'KNOW, CHEWIE... I THINK I'D PREFER HYSTERICS.

BUT WHAT HAN SOLO GETS, AS THE TRIO REACHES THE VESSEL'S HOLD, IS... A PITCHED BATTLE!

MOST OF THE PIRATES ARE FIGHTING TO SAVE THE CRUISER! WE'LL BE FINE ONCE THIS BUNCH IS OUT OF THE WAY!

GREAT! I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK WE MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE!

AND DESPITE THE CORRELLIAN CAPTAIN'S **CONCERN**, THE FIREFIGHT ULTIMATELY **ENDS**...

...WITH THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** SOARING **FREE!**

PRINCESS, EVERY **INSTINCT** IN MY SMUGGLER'S SOUL IS SCREAMIN': **GET** WHILE THE GETTIN'S **GOOD**--

--BUT IF YOU'VE GOT REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WHATEVER IS **ZAPPING** JACK'S SHIP ALSO NAILED **LUKE SKYWALKER** WHILE HE WAS **SCOUTING** THIS WATERBALL BELOW--

--I'LL GO ALONG WITH CHECKING IT **OUT.**

I'LL **GO**... BUT I WON'T **LIKE** IT.

OTHERS ARE FINDING THINGS THEY DON'T LIKE ...OTHERS SUCH AS **GOVERNOR QUARG.**

WHY ISN'T THAT SHIP **DOWN** BY NOW, YOU WORTHLESS INCOMPETENTS! **WHY ISN'T IT DOWN?!**

YOUR HONOR... IT'S TOO **BIG!** TOO **POWERFUL!** THE **JAMMER** CAN'T--

DON'T **TELL** ME THAT! YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING **WRONG!** ARE YOU IN SYMPATHY WITH YOUR **FELLOW TECHNOS**--?

THOSE **TRAITORS** WHO BECAME THE **DRAGON LORDS!**

N-NO, SIR...! BUT THE EQUIPMENT'S ALREADY AT **POWER FREQUENCIES** WE'VE NEVER RISKED BEFORE! THE **STRAIN** COULD--

GOVERNOR! THE LOOKOUTS HAVE **SIGHTED** SOMETHING--

DRAGONS! A WHOLE BLASTED ARMY OF 'EM! IT'S A FULL-SCALE ATTACK!

GET EVERY HYDRA-SKIMMER THAT CAN FLOAT INTO THE WATER!

THE DRAGON LORDS HAVE OBVIOUSLY SCENTED THE BIG PRIZE WE'RE AFTER AND WANT IT FOR THEMSELVES!

SKYWALKER, YOU SHOWED FLAIR AS A SKIMMER PILOT TODAY. YOU'LL COMMAND A GUNSHIP--

--AND YOU'LL FIGHT WELL OR SEE THOSE DROIDS YOU'RE SO FOND OF DISMANTLED, WHATEVER THEIR VALUE!

AND SOON, LUKE FINDS HIMSELF IN THE MIDST OF A BATTLE HE DOES NOT WANT TO FIGHT!

THESE CREATURES ARE FRENZIED! LIKE THE ONE WHO ATTACKED US WHEN WE FIRST CRASHED HERE!*

EVEN THE ONES CARRYING DRAGON LORDS SEEM WILD... OUT OF CONTROL!

*BACK IN STAR WARS #11 --ARCH.

LIKE IT OR NOT... I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT BACK! OR ELSE--

HEY! SOMETHING'S MAKING THEM TURN! W-WHAT--?!

HAN SOLO! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

PRINCESS, I THINK WE'VE JUST INTERRUPTED SOMEBODY'S WAR!

EVEN YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE A BETTER LANDING THAN THAT!

STOP REVVING YOUR REACTORS, YOUR ROYALNESS! I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE!

WE'RE NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE BEAM LOCKED-IN ON CRIMSON JACK'S CRUISER... THERE'S ENOUGH THROW OUT FROM IT DOWN HERE TO AFFECT OUR DRIVE, TOO!

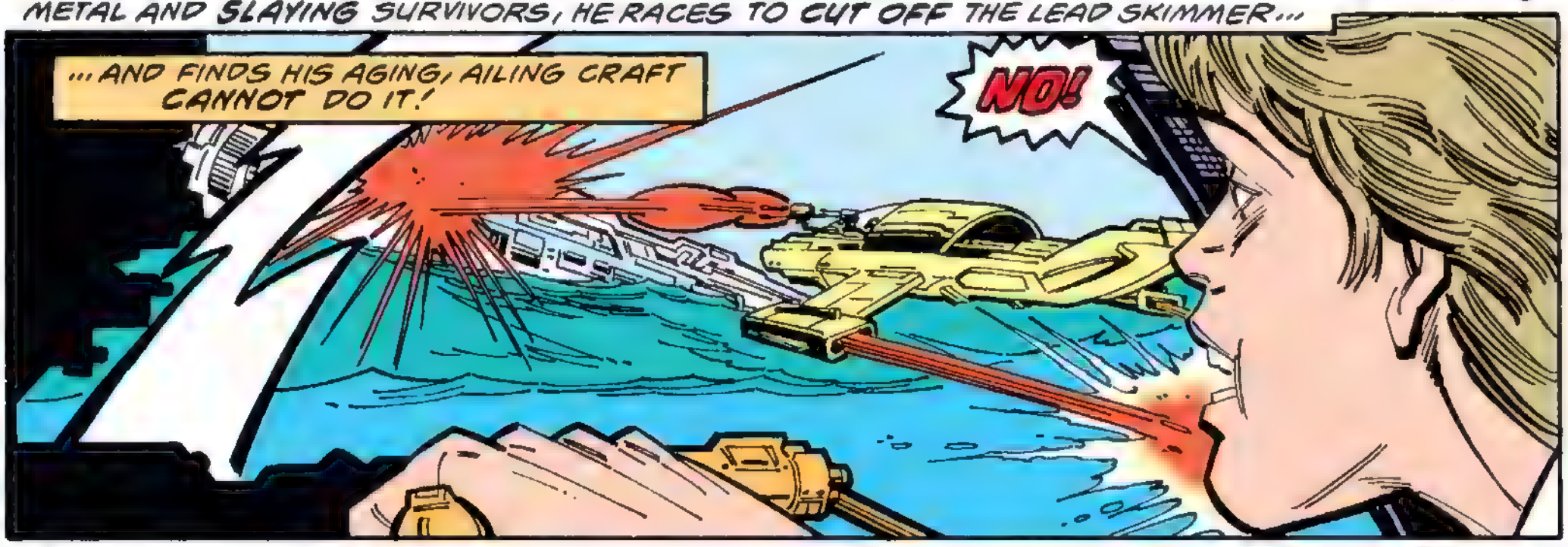
NOT TO WORRY! THE FALCON CAN FLOAT FOREVER. BUT UNTIL THAT FORCE STOPS... WE WON'T BE FLYING ANYWHERE!

BEFORE THE FIGHTING PICKS UP AGAIN, LET'S SHOW THE GUYS IN BOATS WE'RE FRIENDLY.

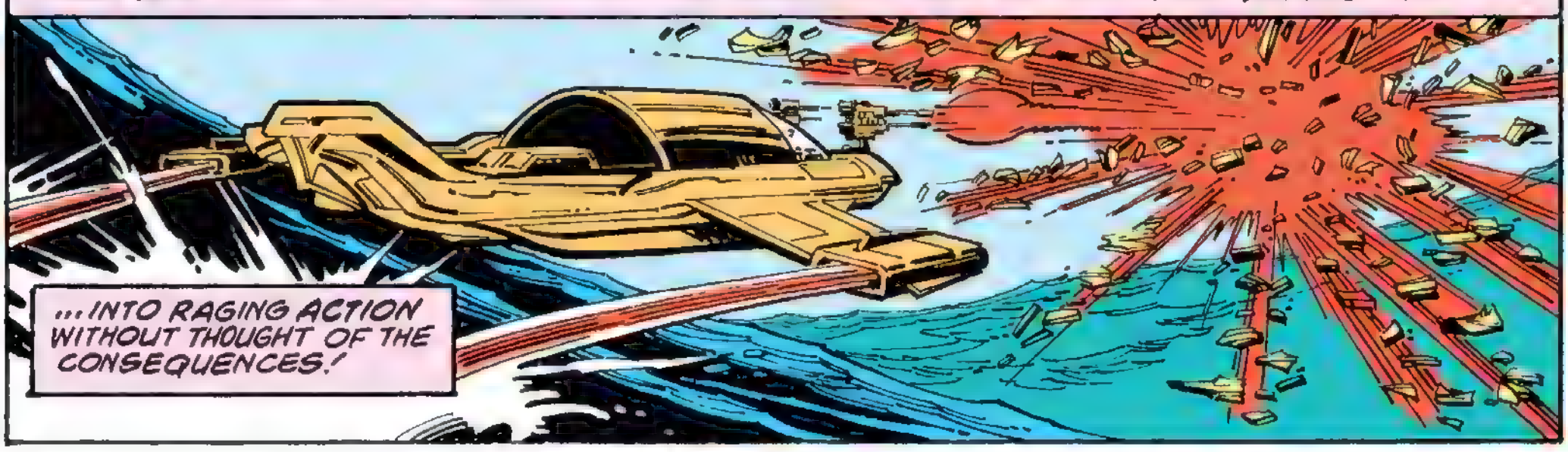
THEY LOOK EASIER TO TALK WITH THAN THOSE OVERSIZED SEA SNAKES!

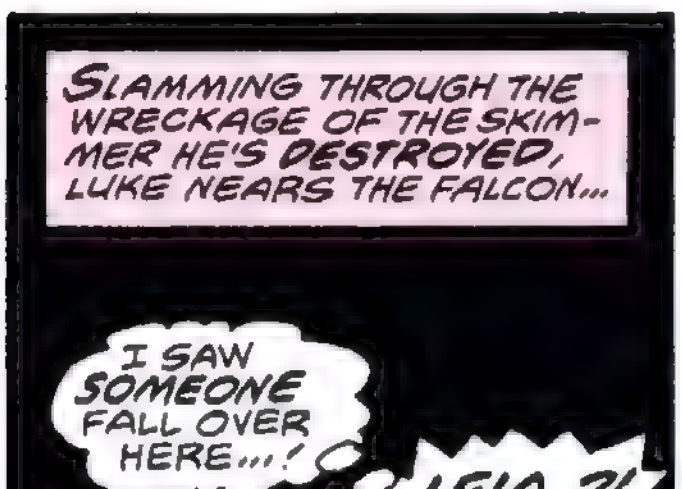
BUT APPEARANCES ON THIS WATERWORLD ARE DECEIVING...

...NO ONE KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN LUKE! REMEMBERING GOVERNOR QUARG'S RULE OF SAVING METAL AND SLAYING SURVIVORS, HE RACES TO CUT OFF THE LEAD SKIMMER...



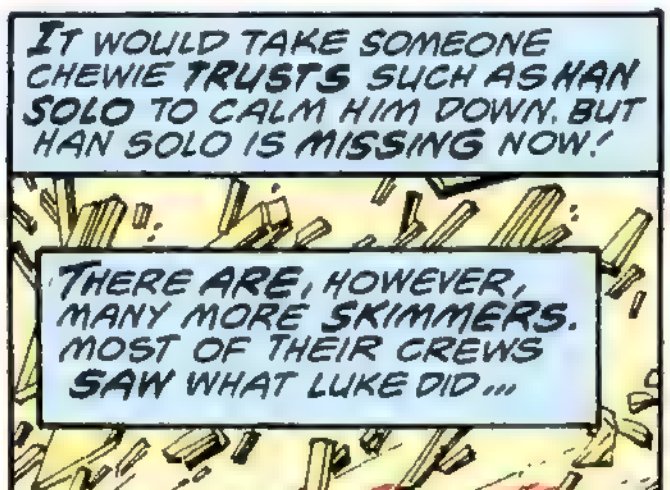
LUKE SKYWALKER HAS SEEN HIS AUNT AND UNCLE DEAD BY THE EMPIRE'S HAND, HAS WATCHED OBI WAN KENOBI APPARENTLY FALL BEFORE THE SITH LORD, DARTH VADER. NOW, TO SEE A LASER BOLT LASH AT TWO FRIENDS AND THE REBEL PRINCESS HE HOLDS DEAR DRIVES HIM...





WOOKIEES ARE NOT SOPHISTICATED. SOMEONE IN A SKIMMER TRIED TO KILL HIM... SO ANYONE IN A SKIMMER IS SUSPECT!

IT WOULD TAKE SOMEONE CHEWIE TRUSTS SUCH AS HAN SOLO TO CALM HIM DOWN. BUT HAN SOLO IS MISSING NOW!



DARKNESS! LUKE SLOWLY STRUGGLES OUT OF IT... AS A FAMILIAR VOICE SOUNDS URGENTLY NEARBY.

--OBVIOUSLY DON'T UNDERSTAND! WE'RE ALL PRISONERS OF GOVERNOR QUARG NOW--

--BEING HELD HERE UNTIL HE HAS TIME TO DEAL WITH US! BEING MUTUALLY DOOMED!

--IT HARDLY SEEMS REASONABLE TO QUARREL AMONG OURSELVES!

THREEPIO!

MASTER LUKE! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO THIS SHAGGY BRUTE THAT HE'S SOMEHOW MISJUDGING YOU AND THE SITUATION!

ARAGHH!

--BECAUSE AT THIS RATE, IT DOESN'T SEEM WE'LL SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE OUR DEATH SENTENCES CARRIED OUT!

NEXT ISSUE: CALL IT ARMAGEDDON!

STAR WARS™

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THE SOUND OF ARMAGEDDON!

IT'S HOPELESS, ARTOO! NOTHING ANY OF US SAYS IS REACHING CHEWBACCA! HE'S CONVINCED MASTER LUKE PLAYED A PART IN HAN SOLO'S DEATH--

--AND HE WON'T STOP UNTIL HE TEARS US AND THIS ENTIRE SHIP'S PRISON TO PIECES!

THREEPIO! QUIT TALKING AND HELP ME!

"WHAT DO YOU CALL SOMEONE WHO FIGHTS AN ENRAGED WOOKIEE BAREHANDED?" "DEAD."--OLD CANTINA JOKE.

LUKE SKYWALKER IS NOT DEAD YET. BUT HE'D BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT THINGS DON'T LOOK HOPEFUL HERE ON THIS OBSCURE WATERWORLD OF THE STAR-SUN, DREXEL. FOR EVEN IF HE AND CHEWIE RESOLVE THEIR MISUNDERSTANDING...

...THEIR FIGHT IS BUT ONE SMALL, BARELY RELATED INCIDENT IN A MUCH, MUCH WIDER WAR!

AND JUST OUTSIDE THE HULL OF THE GREAT CITY-SHIP THAT HOLDS THEM, THAT WAR GOES ON IN ALL ITS FURY--

THE SEA DRAGONS ARE IN A FRENZY, GOVERNOR QUARG... NO MATTER WHAT DAMAGE WE INFLICT, THEY KEEP COMING!

SOMEHOW, THEIR MASTERS KNOW I'M ONTO THE GREATEST PRIZE OF ALL, COMMANDER--

--AND ARE WILLING TO DESTROY THEMSELVES TRYING TO WREST IT FROM ME!

BUT, YOUR HONOR... IT'S US THAT'S BEING DESTROYED! IF THINGS KEEP GOING AS THEY ARE... WE WON'T HAVE A SKIMMER LEFT!

WE'VE GOT TO SET SAIL, SIR! MOVE THE SHIP BEFORE--

--AS SERPENT-RIDING DRAGON LORDS STORM AGAINST HYDRA-SKIMMERS OF THE SHIP DWELLERS!

IT IS A CONFLICT THAT HAS BEEN BUILDING FOR OVER A GENERATION... SINCE MEN FIRST CRASHED ON THIS HARSH PLANET AND ONE FACTION SPLIT FROM THE LARGER GROUP. NOW, THEY WAR... AND THIS MAY VERY WELL BE...
THE FINAL BATTLE!

MOVE?! YOU MEAN FLEE, YOU COWARDLY SEA SCUD!

AND WE'D HAVE TO SHUT DOWN THE SONIC-JAMMER TO DO IT--

WAP!

--WHEN IT'S LOCKED IN ON THE BIGGEST SPACECRAFT WE'VE EVER NETTED!

IT'S TOO BIG, GOVERNOR! THE TECHNOS SAY THE JAMMER CAN'T BRING IT DOWN! WE'RE DRAWING ALL THE POWER FROM THE SHIP'S ENGINES JUST TRYING --

YOU'LL ALL TRY HARDER OR HANG!

IT'S UP THERE IN ORBIT, COMMANDER... AND I WANT IT!

"IT" WAS ONCE AN IMPERIAL CRUISER. WRECKED IN BATTLE, IT WAS REFITTED AND RECONDITIONED BY CRIMSON JACK AND HIS STAR PIRATES AT GREAT COST AND GREAT EFFORT...

...AND THE LAST THING THEY WANT IS TO SEE IT LOST ON A WORLD OF ENDLESS OCEAN!

CHIEF ENGINEER! HAVE YOU LEARNED WHAT IN THE CIVILIZED SYSTEMS HAS ITS CLAWS INTO US?!

SEEMS TO BE A JAMMER, CAP'N JACK! USES SONIC WAVES TO DISRUPT OUR DRIVE--

I HEARD IT WAS A FAVORITE TRICK OF SPACE WRECKERS IN THE KORTEEN ASTEROID BELT.

THEY MADE OUT SMARTLY STRIPPING CARGO FROM VESSELS THEY WRECKED... UNTIL THE OLD REPUBLIC PUT 'EM ON THE RUN! COULD BE THEY RAN TO THIS WORLD BELOW. *

I. DON'T WANT A HISTORY LESSON, MAN... CAN WE ESCAPE THE BLASTED THING?!

*A VERY GOOD GUESS... AS ALL READERS OF LAST ISSUE KNOW -- ARCHIE.

IF OUR EMERGENCY DRIVE CAN OUTLAST THEIR JAMMER, CAP'N. RIGHT NOW... IT LOOKS LIKE A DRAW!

THIS IS THAT BLASTED HAN SOLO'S DOING!

HE LURED ME INTO THIS MESS WITH TALL TALES OF REBEL TREASURE JUST SO HE COULD RESCUE PRINCESS LEIA!

JOLLI! WHAT'S THE REPORT FROM THE HOLD?! HOW DID SOLO AND HIS FURRY FIRST MATE ESCAPE WITH THE WOMAN...?

THEY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION WHEN THAT JAMMER THING HIT US... AND FOUGHT THEIR WAY TO THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!

IF THAT SMUGGLING SHIP CAN FLY... WHAT ABOUT ALL OUR BOARDING CRAFT?

SABOTAGED, CAP'N... BEFORE THE THREE OF 'EM BLASTED OFF! THEY'RE LONG GONE AND IT'S PARTLY MY FAULT!

I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN CAUGHT OFF GUARD NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED... EXCEPT THAT PRINCESS KEPT FILLING MY HEAD WITH THOUGHTS ABOUT THINGS OTHER THAN PIRATING!

THINGS SUCH AS BEING ATTRACTED TO A MAN FOR THE FIRST TIME... A MAN LIKE HAN SOLO.

AND HAN SOLO, DESPITE THE WORST **FEARS** OF HIS WOOKIEE FRIEND, CHEWBACCA ...

... AND DESPITE BEING **KNOCKED OFF** THE CRASH-LANDED MILLENNIUM FALCON BY A HYDRA-SKIMMER **CANNON BLAST**...

...IS **ALIVE** AND **WET** AND IN THE HANDS OF THE **DRAGON LORDS!**

WHICH LEAVES ONLY ONE OTHER STAR WARRIOR **UNACCOUNTED** FOR... PRINCESS **LEIA ORGANA**, ONCE SENATOR FROM ALDERAAN, NOW A GUIDING FIGURE IN THE REBEL ALLIANCE...

... AND **TRAPPED** WITH HAN SOLO'S DOWNED SPACECRAFT!

THEY'VE STOPPED **TOWING** THE SHIP! THAT MEANS I CAN EXPECT **VISITORS** SOON ...!

THANK THE FORCE, THEIR **LASERS** DON'T SEEM TO BE FUNCTIONING AT **FULL STRENGTH.** IF HAN AND CHEWBACCA WEREN'T HIT **DIRECTLY**--*

*IN THE **ATTACK** SHOWN LAST MONTH-- ARCHIE.

--THEY COULD HAVE **SURVIVED!** BUT SINCE I WASN'T OUT OF THE **HATCH** WHEN THE BLAST CAME... I MAY BE THE ONLY **LUCKY** ONE!

IN WHICH CASE, I'LL **SEE** THAT THOSE SKIMMER-RIDING KILLERS DON'T GET AWAY **SCOT FREE** WITH WHAT THEY'VE DONE!

BUT AS PRINCESS LEIA SETS HER BLASTER FOR 'KILL'... NEW ATTENTION FALLS ON THE MILLENNIUM FALCON FROM HIGH ABOVE.

THERE'S A YEAR'S WORTH OF METAL AND SPARE PARTS IN THAT CRAFT YOUR HONOR!

WHY FIGHT TO HAUL DOWN THAT ORBITING MONSTER WHEN THIS ONE HAS FALLEN IN OUR LAPS?!

BECAUSE IF WE SUCCEED, IT WILL MEAN METAL, PARTS, AND PLUNDER FOR A LIFETIME, YOU DOLT--

--WE'LL HAVE WEAPONS ENOUGH TO WIPE THE SEA DRAGONS AND THEIR MASTERS OFF THIS WORLD FOREVER!

WE'LL MAKE THIS PLANET TRULY OURS... SOMETHING MY FOOL OF A FATHER WHO BROUGHT US HERE WAS NEVER ABLE TO DO!

BUT GOVERNOR QUARG--

--THE JAMMER ISN'T BUDGING THAT BIG STARSHIP! THE DRAGON LORDS WILL SINK US LONG BEFORE IT EVER HAS POWER ENOUGH TO!

YOU'RE SHOUTING YOURSELF TO DEATH, COMMANDER! THE SOLUTION FLOATS AT THE DOCK BELOW US.

BUT IT MEANS A REPRIEVE FOR THE MASTER MACHINE-SMITH AND HIS DROIDS!

WHICH MIGHT CHEER LUKE, THREEPIO, AND ARTOO-DEETOO... IF THEY LIVE TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

IT WORKED, SIR! YOU GOT HIM TO TRIP OVER ME--

BUT... WON'T HE BE EVEN ANGRIER WHEN HE GETS UP?!

ARTOO! NOW!

GROOWK!

USE YOUR EXTINGUISHER FULL BLAST!!

SPRAY FOAM SPEWS FROM THE R2 UNIT! FOAM GENERALLY USED TO SMOTHER THE FLAMES OF SHIP-TO-SHIP SPACE BATTLE...

...BUT WHICH NOW CHOKES OFF AIR AND SMOTHERS THE RAGING WOOKIEE WITH UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

≥WHEW!≤ THAT SAVES US FROM KILLING EACH OTHER FOR A WHILE, BUT--

SKYWALKER! GOVERNOR QUARG WANTS YOU AND YOUR MECHANICALS... NOW!

AND A SHORT WHILE LATER...

YOU WANT TO LINK THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S ENGINES WITH THOSE OF YOUR CITY-SHIP...?

TO PROVIDE THE EXTRA POWER MY SONIC-JAMMER NEEDS!

ONLY YOU AND YOUR DROIDS HAVE THE TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW TO GET IT DONE QUICKLY ENOUGH! THAT'S WHY THEY HAVEN'T BEEN SCRAPPED--

--AND YOU AREN'T SWINGING FROM A YARDARM FOR BETRAYING US!

WHY YOU FAT-FACED EXCUSE FOR A LEADER! MY FRIENDS WERE ON THIS SHIP... AND ONE OF YOUR SKIMMERS GUNNED THEM DOWN! IS IT ANY WONDER I BLEW IT OUT OF THE WATER?!

I'M ONLY SORRY YOU WEREN'T ABOARD!

NOT ALL YOUR FRIENDS PERISHED, SKYWALKER--

--IT COST US A NUMBER OF GOOD MEN TO DIG OUT THIS HIDDEN SURVIVOR!

NOW SHALL I MAKE THE OBVIOUS THREATS... OR WILL YOU BEGIN WORK AT ONCE?

AS GOVERNOR QUARG SMILES TRIUMPHANTLY... SOMETHING **BRUSHES** AGAINST HIS BOOT.

HE KICKS OUT **AUTO-MATICALLY**. THE MOUSE-LIKE LIZAROS ARE SHIP-BOARD SCAVENGERS...

...HARMLESS **NUISANCES**, ALWAYS UNDERFOOT, SCARCELY WORTH A SECOND THOUGHT.

THIS **PARTICULAR** NUISANCE SWIMS TO THE PERIMETER OF **COMBAT**...

...WHERE IT ATTACHES ITSELF TO A WOUNDED **SEA DRAGON**. SOON...

...IT IS CARRIED **FAR** FROM THE CITY-SHIP TO AN UNDERWATER **MOUNTAIN**...

...AND THE SECRET WORLD LOCKED **WITHIN** IT!

ANOTHER DRAGON **INJURED**...! THE BATTLE GROWS MORE **DEVASTATING** WITH EACH MOMENT!

WE'RE **FORTUNATE** TO HAVE GOTTEN YOU HERE WHEN WE **DID**, MISTER SOLO.

YEAH. THESE **AIR-POCKET CAVERNS** MAKE A REFRESHING BREAK IN SOME PRETTY **DAMP SCENERY**, FRIEND--

--AND IF YOU HADN'T **GRABBED** ME AFTER I WAS **STUNNED** BY THAT LASER BLAST, I'D HAVE **DROWNED** FOR SURE.

BUT, Y'KNOW... THERE'S A **SUSPICIOUS SIDE** OF ME THAT KEEPS WONDERING **WHY** YOU BOTHERED!

BECAUSE IN A WAR TO THE DEATH ... YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MANY ALLIES!

INTERESTING PHILOSOPHY.

YOU POSITIVE THESE KING-SIZE SERPENTS UNDERSTAND IT?

ABSOLUTELY, MISTER SOLO. THEY TAUGHT IT TO US! IF THEY HAD FELT OTHERWISE, WE SO-CALLED DRAGON LORDS WOULD HAVE PERISHED AT SEA A GENERATION AGO WHEN WE DESERTED THE CITY-SHIP!

THE DRAGONS ARE ... INTELLIGENT LIFE-FORMS?!

EXACTLY. WE DON'T RULE THEM ... WE CO-EXIST WITH THEM.

IT'S SOMETHING GOVERNOR QUARG AND HIS FELLOW WRECKERS COULD NEVER ACCEPT OR COMPREHEND--

NO MORE THAN THEY REALIZE THAT THESE LITTLE FELLOWS ARE CHILDREN OF THE DRAGONS ... AND FORM OUR SPY SYSTEM ON THE GREAT SHIP!

INTO THE BARRACKS ... COMPLEX MESSAGES REQUIRE MORE SOPHISTICATED COMMUNICATION THAN MY SONIC-STAFF PROVIDES!

AND INSIDE QUARTERS CONSTRUCTED FROM SALVAGED PARTS OF WRECKED SPACECRAFT...

THEY COMMUNICATE WITH SOUND, RIGHT ...? PITCHED BEYOND HUMAN HEARING AT ULTRA-SONIC LEVELS!

UNFORTUNATELY, WHAT'S NOW BEING COMMUNICATED IS GRIM INDEED! YOUR SHIP WILL BE USED TO AUGMENT THE POWER OF QUARG'S SONIC-JAMMER--

"ITS SOUND WAVES CAN DRIVE SOME DRAGONS MAD ... EACH TIME IT'S USED, THE MORE SENSITIVE ONES BECOME FRENZIED AND ATTACK! TODAY IT HAS OPERATED CONSTANTLY...

"... AND ITS EFFECT HAS SPREAD! THE ENTIRE SEA DRAGON POPULATION IS FEELING IT AND FIGHTING IT...

"... AND, AT THE MOMENT, WINNING."

BUT IF IT GOES ON MUCH LONGER OR BECOMES ANY STRONGER... THEN THE DRAGONS WILL DIE, MISTER SOLO.

SWIFTLY AND TERRIBLY--

--AS THE SMALLER AND MORE VULNERABLE AMONG THEM HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO DO!

WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS... NOW! WE CAN'T HOLD ANYTHING IN RESERVE... IT'S GOING TO TAKE EVERY DRAGON AND RIDER WHO CAN MOVE!

ARE YOU WITH US, MISTER SOLO?

DO I HAVE A CHOICE? THIS CAVERN ISN'T MY IDEA OF A GREAT PLACE TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE!

YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE OF GETTING BACK TO THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!

DON'T COUNT ON IT. NEXT TO GOVERNOR QUARG'S SONIC-JAMMER--

--YOUR SHIP IS OUR PRIME TARGET!

HUH...? HEY... WAIT!

BUT THE TIME FOR WAITING IS LONG PAST! SOON, THE LAST OF THE DRAGON LORDS AND THEIR SERPENT ALLIES SURGE TOWARD THE BATTLE...

...AND THE AWESOME DESTRUCTION THAT IT HOLDS!

DESTRUCTION. IT TAKES ON MANY FACES AND FORMS DURING THE LONG DAY OF FIGHTING. IT VISITS BOTH SIDES INDISCRIMINATELY... AND OFTEN!

SEA DRAGONS, SHIP DWELLERS, SERPENT RIDERS, SPACE WRECKERS. ALL FEEL ITS TOUCH... ALL PAY THE PRICE.

SKYWALKER! THE DRAGON LORDS ARE SMASHING THROUGH THE OUTER-FLOATS... WHAT'S TAKING YOU AND THOSE ROBOTS SO LONG?!

MY MEN HAVE COMPLETED THEIR PART OF THE TASK... MUST I START HURTING THE YOUNG LADY?

NO! THIS ISN'T LIKE REPAIRING SKIMMERS ...IT'S COMPLICATED!

HOW DOES IT LOOK, THREEPIO...? HIS 'HONOR' IS FUSSING WORSE THAN A TUSKEN RAIDER WITH A COLLAPSED MOISTURE COLLECTOR!

ARTOO IS DOUBLE CHECKING ALL CONNECTIONS ON THE PRINT-OUT, SIR.

IT APPEARS EVERYTHING WILL WORK JUST AS YOU HOPED, UNLESS --

--S-SOMETHING UNFORESEEN HAPPENS!

WHUNG!

OF ALL THE MOMENTS FOR A SEA DRAGON TO BREAK THROUGH THE INNER-DEFENSES!

HAVE ARTOO ACTIVATE THE LINK-UP WITH THE CITY-SHIP'S ENGINES BEFORE THAT THING BATTERS LOOSE ALL THE CONNECTIONS MADE BY QUARG'S MEN!

I'LL TRY TO SHUT THE OUTER-HATCH BEFORE WE'RE FLOODED!

BUT SOMEONE HAS BEATEN LUKE TO THE HATCH ... FROM THE OTHER SIDE!

A ... DRAGON LORD! LOOK ... YOUR MISSION IS PROBABLY TO DESTROY THIS SHIP! BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE OR WHAT I--

KID--

--EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL.

HAN! Y-YOU'RE ... ALIVE!

WHAT ELSE? SELF-PRESERVATION IS MY SPECIALTY, KID! NOT THAT IT'S EASY--

I HAD TO EAT A LOT OF OCEAN TO BEAT THE OTHER DRAGON LORDS HERE! IF WE WANNA SAVE THE FALCON, WE'VE GOT TO STOP WHATEVER THOSE CRAZY SPACE-WRECKERS ARE HAVING YOU DO!

NO!

I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU WALTZ IN AND SPOIL THINGS NOW!

WHACK!

THREEPIO! ARTOO! WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THAT LINK-UP?!

VEEP OOOT BIF

ACTIVATING EVEN AS WE SPEAK, MASTER LUKE!

KID, I GOTTA STOP YOU. THIS GOES BEYOND SAVING THE FALCON.

YOU'VE JUST GIVEN THAT GUY, QUARG, SOMETHING ALMOST AS DEADLY AS THE DEATH STAR!

HAN! PLEASE... DON'T TRY ANYTHING! JUST WAIT AND--

AND AS THE POWER OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S ENGINES IS ADDED TO THE CITY-SHIP'S PULSING SONIC-JAMMER... THE SOUND OF ARMAGEDDON IS HEARD.

OR, MORE ACCURATELY -- FELT.

GOVERNOR! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO THE DRAGONS!

THEY'RE FALLING... DYING!

IT SEEMS OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, SKYWALKER, HAS HANDED ME A DELIGHTFUL BONUS, GIRL.

BUT LET'S MAKE CERTAIN HIS WORK ALSO ACCOMPLISHED ITS PRIMARY TASK.

MOVE! WE'RE VISITING MY SONIC-JAMMER CREW!

MAKE THE TRIP ALONE, PUDGY! I'M TIRED OF BEING EVERY-BODY'S PAWN!

AND NOW THAT YOU CAN'T ATTACK LUKE WITH-OUT SPOIL-ING YOUR OWN PLANS--

THWUMP!

--THERE'S NO REASON TO PUT UP WITH IT!

BUT WITH GUARDS ON THE DOCK BEHIND HER ... PRINCESS LEIA'S ONLY ESCAPE PATH LEADS WITHIN THE MASSIVE SHIP!

AFTER HER! I WANT HER ALIVE FOR HANGING IF POSSIBLE--

--BUT I WANT HER!

THE PURSUIT MOVES LOUDLY THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDORS OF THE VESSEL'S ELAB-ORATELY SPRAWLING HOLD AREA ...

WHERE UNKNOWN TO THE PRINCESS ...

BRAKASH!

... AND FORGOTTEN BY GOVERNOR QUARG ...

... HELP AWAITS!

THE W-WOOKIEE...! B-BUT... HE WAS LAST REPORTED UNCONSCIOUS ... SAFE TO KEEP PRISONER!

GRRROARK!

HE HAD TO WAKE UP SOME TIME, YOUR HONOR! OUR SHOUTS MUST'VE--

STOP HIM...! AT ANY COST--

--I'VE GOT TO KEEP AFTER THE GIRL!

AND GOVERNOR QUARG TURNS HIS BACK ON TWO GUARDS LONG KNOWN FOR THEIR LOYALTY... AND UTTER LACK OF COMMON SENSE!

WHILE BACK IN THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...

WAVES FROM THAT JAMMER WILL TURN THE DRAGONS' MINDS INTO MUSH, KID!

I CAN'T STAND BY AND LET YOU USE MY SHIP TO HELP!

HAN! WILL YOU LISTEN...!? IT SEEMS LIKE THIS LINK-UP AIDED GOVERNOR QUARG--

--BUT IT ALSO ELIMINATES THE JAMMER'S EFFECT ON THE FALCON! YOUR SHIP'S FULLY OPERATIONAL AGAIN, HAN--

--INCLUDING THE GUN SYSTEM!

HUH?! KID, ARE YOU SAYIN'--?

WE CAN BLAST QUARG'S SONIC-JAMMER TO ATOMS...! SAVE LEIA, THE DRAGONS AND EVERYONE ELSE!

AND, IN MOMENTS, THE FALCON'S CORRELIAN SKIPPER IS ALL SET TO DO EXACTLY THAT...!

ARTOO'S CHECK OF THE PRINT-OUTS SHOWED THE JAMMER'S BEAMING APPARATUS GOES RIGHT UP THE CITY-SHIP'S MAIN-MAST, HAN--

BRING THAT DOWN... AND THE WHOLE WAR IS OVER!

SHARP WORK, HOTSHOT! LEMME JUST CHECK THE SCOPE AND--

TROUBLE, KID! I'M ZEROED ON THE MAINMAST... AND LOOK!

THAT SILHOUETTE ON THE YARDARM! IT'S LEIA! B-BUT--

IF WE DON'T OPEN UP IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES... NOBODY'S GONNA BE ALIVE TO SAVE!

NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN, GIRL! I'D PREFER TO HANG YOU... ALONG WITH SKYWALKER AND THAT WOOKIEE!

HANGINGS ARE VERY GOOD FOR SHIP'S DISCIPLINE, YOU KNOW.

THAT'S WHY I KEEP SO MANY PRISONERS ON HAND.

HOWEVER, SINCE YOU MADE A PERSONAL ATTACK UPON ME, IT WILL BE EQUALLY GOOD FOR THE RABBLE TO SEE THAT THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS LEADER--

--CAN DEAL WITH IT PERSONALLY!

DON'T LOSE YOUR BALANCE YET, MY DEAR... I'D LIKE TO DO THIS GRADUALLY.

LEIA SWAYS. IT IS TEMPTING NOT TO ALLOW THIS SLOWLY ADVANCING MADMAN, BURNING THE SUPPORT AT HER FEET, THE SATISFACTION...

...BUT AS SHE TURNS TO CONTEMPLATE THE WATER FAR, FAR BELOW...

LUKE...!

THERE WAS NO TIME TO REACH THE MAINMAST... LUKE WENT FOR THE NEAREST ONE! THE FIGHT UP IT IS A BLUR... HE ONLY KNOWS HE HAS REACHED HIS GOAL AND MUST ACT NOW! UNFORTUNATELY...

...GOVERNOR QUARG KNOWS IT TOO!

HE EXPECTS HIS FIRST HASTY SHOT TO MISS, BUT KNOWS IT WILL THROW OFF THE BOY'S SWING...

...HE IS WRONG!

THEN AS LUKE'S BACK-SWING BEGINS... THE PRINCESS LEAPS!

AND THE MAINMAST AND YARDARM WHICH HAVE SUPPORTED HER...

...DISAPPEAR IN THE THUNDER OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S GUNS!

IT IS THE END... THOUGH THE ACTUAL FIGHTING CONTINUES ON INTO THE NIGHT. BY THE FIRST GLOW OF DAWN, EVEN THAT IS LONG OVER. AND A NEW, AND HOPEFULLY BETTER, ERA COMES TO THE CITY-SHIP.

THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN REWARD YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS, MISTER SKYWALKER... BUT OUR THANKS WILL BE WITH YOU FOREVER.

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF... I'M GLAD JUST TO HAVE MY MISUNDERSTANDING WITH CHEWBACCA STRAIGHTENED OUT--

--AND FOR THE BUNCH OF US TO FINALLY BE TOGETHER AGAIN! JUST LIKE OLD TIMES, RIGHT, HAN?

HAN...?

BUT HAN SOLO IS STARING AT THE SKY, DEEP IN THOUGHT... ABOUT A GREAT BATTLE CRUISER WHICH MAY STILL BE THERE... AND ITS MASTER, CRIMSON JACK!

NEXT ISSUE SHOWDOWN!!

STAR WARS™

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AT LAST! BEYOND THE MOVIE! BEYOND THE GALAXY!

STAR WARS™

AT LAST! HAN SOLO'S SHOWDOWN WITH CRIMSON JACK!

INFANTINO-AUSTIN

STAR DUEL!

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CONTINUING THE SAGA BEGUN IN THE FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS RELEASED BY TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

ARCHIE GOODWIN • WRITER/EDITOR
CARMINE INFANTINO & TERRY AUSTIN • ARTISTS
JOHN COSTANZA • letterer
JANICE COHEN • colorist
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HIGH ABOVE THE LONE PLANET OF THE STAR-SUN **DREXEL** HANGS THE PIRATE CRUISER OF **CRIMSON JACK**. UNTIL RECENTLY, IT WAS **TRAPPED** IN ITS ORBIT AROUND THE UNNAMED OCEAN-COVERED WORLD BELOW...

...BUT EVENTS ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE HAVE **CHANGED** ALL THAT!

IT'S FOR **CERTAIN**, CAP'N JACK! THE **SONIC-JAMMER** THAT WAS HOLDIN' US HERE HAS BEEN **KNOCKED OUT**--

LET'S PUT SOME **LIGHT YEARS** BETWEEN US AN' THIS CURSED **SYSTEM!**

I'M NOT AFTER **ESCAPE**, CHIEF ENGINEER... I'M AFTER **BLOOD!** **HAN SOLO'S** IN PARTICULAR--

AND I WANT **EVERY SCANNER** COMBING THAT WATERBALL UNTIL OUR SLIPPERY CORELLIAN **SPACE HOUND** IS TURNED UP!

BUT, **CAP'N...!** HE SURELY WARPED OUT OF THIS SECTOR THE MINUTE HIM AN' HIS **WOOKIEE PAL** GRABBED THAT **REBEL PRINCESS** FROM US. *

*AS SHOWN IN **STAR WARS** #13 --ASTRAL ARCHIE.

HAS EVERYONE BUT **ME** GOT A **BLACK HOLE** FOR A BRAIN?!

BACK TO YOUR STATION!

SOLO WENT TO TOO MUCH **TROUBLE** GETTING US TO THIS SYSTEM, **THIS** WORLD...! **SOMETHING** DOWN THERE **INTERESTED** HIM AND PRINCESS LEIA! SO--

CAP'N! I THINK WE'VE **GOT** 'EM!

JOLLI! HOW'S YOUR **REPAIR GANG** COMING WITH OUR **FIGHTER CRAFT...?**

CONSIDERING HOW **FAST** HE HAD TO WORK, THAT SMOOTH-TALKIN' SPICE SMUGGLER DID QUITE A JOB OF **SABOTAGING** THEM--

I DON'T **NEED** A REVIEW OF HIS **HANDIWORK,** GIRL! WILL ANY OF OUR SHIPS **FLY?!**

AT LEAST THREE WILL BE SERVICEABLE SHORTLY, CAP'N. AND WITH A BIT MORE WORK, WE'LL --

GOOD ENOUGH!

YOU WERE ITCHING TO PUT A BLASTER TO MISTER SOLO FROM THE SECOND YOU SAW HIM, JOLLI --

--I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO INDULGE YOUR BLOODTHIRSTY STREAK TO THE FULLEST!

JOLLI NODS TO THE REPAIR BAY COMMUNICATOR SCREEN. THIS IS THE KIND OF TASK SHE'S PUSHED FOR EVER SINCE BECOMING A SPACE PIRATE. TO BE HARDER, TOUGHER THAN ANY MAN AROUND HER...

...EVEN A MAN SHE HAS COME TO HAVE DECIDEDLY CONFUSED FEELINGS ABOUT. A MAN NOW PINPOINTED AS BEING ON THE BARELY-CHARTED WORLD BELOW THEM. A MAN NAMED...

--HAN SOLO! IF YOU LIKE THAT SHIP'S RAILING SO MUCH PERHAPS WE CAN TAKE IT BACK TO THE MOONS OF YAVIN WITH US!

THE PRINCESS IS RIGHT, HAN. THE BIG WAR BETWEEN THE DRAGON RIDERS AND THE CITY-SHIP DWELLERS IS FINALLY ENDED--*

WHY STAND WATCH AT THE RAIL?

* IN AN EPIC BATTLE WITNESSED LAST ISSUE:-- ARCHIE.

BECAUSE *UNFINISHED BUSINESS* SEEMS TO HAVE A WAY OF *CATCHING UP* WITH ME, KID.

AND WHEN IT COMES WITH A *RED BEARD* AND AN EQUALLY FLAMING *EGO*... I *GUARANTEE* IT!

CRIMSON JACK...!

EXACTLY, YOUR HIGHNESS! LUKE AND I SAVED THE DAY FOR THE *DRAGONS* AND THEIR *RIDERS* WHEN WE BLAST-ED AWAY THE SHIP'S *SONIC-JAMMER*--

--BUT THAT ALSO *FREES* JACK'S CRUISER! HE'LL HAVE IT PRIMED TO *ATTACK* WHEN WE *DE-PART* THIS SOMEWHAT *SOGGY PARADISE.*

FOR YOUR PART IN *OVER-THROWING* THE RUTHLESS GOVERNOR QUARG, YOU'RE MOST WELCOME TO *STAY* HERE--

*ALSO PART OF *LAST ISSUE'S* AWESOME ACTION.--ARCH.

--BUT I GATHER, MY FRIENDS, YOU HAVE YOUR *OWN* WAR TO WAGE.

SOME OF US AT ANY RATE,.. ONCE *CHEWIE* AND THE *DROIDS* FINISH CHECKING OUT THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON.*

HEY, THREEPIO! WHAT'S THE *GOOD WORD..?*

IT REALLY DEPENDS ON WHICH *LANGUAGE*, MASTER SOLO. AFTER ALL, I *AM* PROGRAM-ED TO SPEAK A RATHER *WIDE VARIETY* AND IN *EACH* OF THEM THERE'S --

THAT'S *NOT* WHAT I MEANT, ALLOY HEAD! I MEANT--

THREEPIO.. GET DOWN!

YOU MEANT *THAT,* SIR? BUT WHAT'S SO *GOOD* ABOUT--

GET DOWN INTO THE *FALCON*, YOU LONG-WINDED ASSEMBLY OF CIRCUITS--

--BEFORE YOU'RE *BLOWN AWAY!*

GETTING *DOWN*, SIR!

*AND AS THE Y-WING FIGHTER **DIVES**, ALL GUNS **BLAZING**, A FIGURE ON THE SPRAWLING CITY-SHIP...*

...DOES SOME DIVING OF HIS *OWN!*

HAN!

MOVE, KIDS! IF WE'RE NOT *STAR-BORN* IN RECORD TIME--

--CRIMSON JACK'S *EMISSARY* IS GONNA *SINK* OUR TRANSPORTATION WHERE SHE *FLOATS!*

HE ALWAYS *WAS* VERY BRAVE... BUT *SLOPPY!* I THOUGHT HE PUT ALL THOSE PIRATE *PURSUIT SHIPS* OUT OF COM-MISSION!

UH... SPEAKING OF *BRAVERY*, LEIA... ER... *PRINCESS*. THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN KEEPING *HIDDEN* SINCE THE DROIDS AND I FIRST *CRASHED* ON THIS PLANET--

--I CAN'T *SWIM!*

PLASH!

*MEANTIME, THE HAMMERING AT THE MILLENNIUM FALCON **MOUNTS!***

ROR KOWR!
SLOWER, YOU GREAT HUNK OF HAIR--
--WOOKIEE IS NOT ONE OF MY PRIMARY LANGUAGES! OBVIOUSLY YOU GOT THE DEFLECTOR SHIELDS UP IN TIME! NOW WHAT'S THIS ABOUT--
--AN OVER-HEAD FIRING TOGGLE?! ARTOO, DO YOU HAVE ANY NOTION WHAT THE SURLY CREATURE IS--
BWEET VRR-POOT!
IT'S THIS...? THEN JUST SAY SO WITHOUT ANY NASTY EMBELLISHMENTS ABOUT MY CHARACTER! NOW, WHAT'S IT SUPPOSED TO--
FTOOM!
BAROOSH!
OH--!
WELL, MY SPECIALTIES OF TRANSLATION AND PROTOCOL HARDLY COVER THAT!
PADDLE FASTER, KIDS! CHEWIE'S BUYING US SOME TIME--
--BUT THE WAY THAT FIGHTER PILOT'S SCORING, THE FALCON'S DEFLECTORS MAY NOT BE UP TO ANOTHER PASS!
I'M TRYING, HAN! LIFE ON A DESERT PLANET LIKE TATOOINE DIDN'T EXACTLY PREPARE ME FOR THIS!
YOU'RE DOING FINE, LUKE--
SAVE THE PEP TALK FOR LATER, YOUR WORSHIP--
INSIDE QUICK... OR WE'LL GET OUR TAILS BURNED!

A HATCH CLANGS **SHUT!** AND MOMENTS LATER, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON ROARS **SKYWARD...**

...**POUNDED** BY FIERY ENERGY BOLTS FROM THE PURSUING Y-WING FIGHTER!

WHAT A WAY TO SAY **GOOD-BYE** TO A WORLD WE JUST **SAVED--!**

KID, I CAN'T RECALL MAKING ANYTHING **BUT** FAST EXITS WHENEVER **YOU'RE** ABOARD MY SHIP!

ONLY **THIS** ONE ISN'T MADE **YET!** YOU TOO **WET** TO MAN A **GUN,** HOTSHOT?

OF **COURSE** NOT! BUT I'D THINK THE **FALCON** COULD LEAVE ONE CRUDDY **Y-WING-ER** EATING ITS **AFTER-BLAST!**

DEAD **RIGHT,** MISTER SKYWALKER. BUT MY OL' PAL, **CRIMSON JACK--**

--NEVER MADE IT THAT **EASY** FOR ANYONE! AND FOR **ME--**

--HE'S BOUND TO GO **ALL OUT!**

COUNT YOURSELF **CORRECT,** CAPTAIN SOLO! THE **WALKING CARPET** YOU CALL A **FIRST MATE** IS MAKING NOISES ABOUT SOMETHING ON THE **SCOPE--**

GORWK!

--A PAIR OF HOSTILES!

PLUS THE ONE COMIN' UP **BEHIND** US...! STAY **LOOSE,** LUKE... IT'S GONNA BE LIKE **OLD TIMES!**

OLD TIMES. LUKE THINKS OF THEIR ESCAPE FROM THE **DEATH STAR***... THE PAIN OF LOSING HIS MENTOR, **BEN KENOBI**, STILL FRESH UPON HIM. THIS ISN'T **THAT** BAD. AT LEAST... NOT **YET!**

KEEP **POURING** IT ON, KID! OUT OF THE **GALACTIC SLUDGE** JACK USES AS HIS **CREW**, HE'S FIELDED THREE PRETTY FAIR **STAR-PILOTS**! PARTICULARLY--

*SHOWN IN THE NOW-CLASSIC **STAR WARS** #4 & 5. --ARCHIE.

"--WHOEVER'S HANDLING THAT **Y-WING!**"

KEEP YOUR **DISTANCE**, RAIDER TWO AND THREE! THAT SMUGGLING SHIP IS BETTER **ARMED** AND **SHIELDED** THAN IT APPEARS!

JUST WORRY THEM **ALONG**... THE WAY THE CAP'N **WANTED!**

AYE, JOLLI--

--WE KNOW OUR **JOB**! YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP **PROVIN'** THAT YOU'RE OUR FLIGHT **COMMANDER!**

AT THESE WORDS, JOLLI **TENSES**. AND IN THE FIERY LASER BLASTS **BEFORE** HER, SHE BEGINS TO SEE THE FLAMES OF **ANOTHER** PLACE AND TIME...

...FLAMES RAGING THROUGH AN **OUTLAW STRONGHOLD** ON A FRONTIER WORLD.

BLASTED **IMPERIALS** HAVE FOUND US **AGAIN,** WOMAN! IT'S TIME FOR MOVIN' **FAST** AN' TRAVELIN' **LIGHT!**

Y-YOU'RE... NOT... **LEAVING** US...?

OF **COURSE** I AM! THE LAST THING A FUGITIVE FROM THE **EMPIRE** NEEDS IS **EXCESS BAGGAGE** WEIGHIN' HIM DOWN!

B-BUT... I'M YOUR **WIFE!** JOLLI'S YOUR **CHILD!**

WE'LL **HELP** YOU... **FIGHT** WITH YOU!

FORGET IT, WOMAN... YOU'RE NOT **GOOD** ENOUGH!

WITHOUT FURTHER **WORD,** THE MAN WAS **GONE,** LEAVING GIRL AND MOTHER **ALONE...**

...UNTIL AN **AERIAL TOR-PEDO** STRUCK! THE WOMAN FAILED TO **SURVIVE,** BUT HER **CHILD** LIVED. LIVED TO BECOME...

...A **MAN-HATER** AND **SPACE-PIRATE,** EVER READY TO **PROVE** THAT SHE'S "**GOOD** ENOUGH!"

THAT **HAN SOLO** STIRRED UP SOME **STRANGE FEELINGS** INSIDE ME WHILE HE AND PRINCESS LEIA WERE OUR **PRISONERS--**

--BUT **NOW'S** THE MOMENT WHEN I **SHOW** THE GALAXY I CAN WRITE THE **END** TO **ANY** MAN!

HAN! THE **PIRATE CRUISER** IS LOOMING **AHEAD!**

THOSE **PURSUIT SHIPS** AREN'T TRYING TO GUN US **DOWN**... THEY'RE **DRIVING** US INTO ITS **TRACTOR BEAM!**

JACK'S GOTTEN TRICKY IN HIS OLD AGE! BUT DON'T WORRY, BOYS AND GIRLS--

--I WAS BORN TRICKY!

GIVE ME A FULL REVERSE, CHEWIE--

--MANEUVERING OUT OF THIS WON'T BE ANY WORSE THAN THREADING OUR WAY THROUGH THE FIRE RINGS OF FORNAX!

ARROW!

WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT--

--THAT WAS PRETTY HORRIBLE, CHEWIE!

THE SUDDEN TURN WOULD SEND MOST STARSHIPS SHREDDING INTO PIECES...

...BUT MOST STARSHIPS DON'T HAVE THE SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA HAVE GIVEN THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!

GET READY, LUKE! AT THE RATE WE'RE CLOSING WITH THOSE THREE BANDITS THEY'VE ONLY GOT ONE CHOICE--

I KNOW, HAN. BREAK--

--OR CRASH HEAD ON WITH US!

FOR TWO, THE DECISION IS BREAK...AND THE RESULTS ARE FATAL! BUT...

HOLY--! THAT CRAZY Y-WINGER ISN'T BUDGIN'!

SUICIDE ISN'T JOLLI'S AIM. SHE MEANS TO CLEAR THE FALCON, BUT WITHOUT BECOMING A TARGET...

SHRAAK!

...AND SHE COMES VERY CLOSE TO SUCCEEDING!

HAN! LUKE! CAN EITHER OF YOU ASCERTAIN DAMAGE DONE?!

THE SHIP'S GOING CRAZY!

OOF!

FELT LIKE THAT Y-WING WAS TAKING MY GUN TURRET WITH IT, PRINCESS... BUT I THINK IT ONLY SCRAPED US!

AT LEAST THE HULL'S INTACT... OR WE WOULDN'T STILL BE BREATHING!

THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS, KID--

--THE BAD IS THAT "SCRAPE" MUST HAVE DAMAGED OUR GYRO CONTROL MODULE! THAT'S WHY WE'RE YAWLING LIKE THIS!

SHUT HER DOWN, CHEWIE! WE'LL TRY TO MAKE REPAIRS!

WASTED EFFORT, MISTER SOLO...YOU'RE ONLY MOMENTS AWAY FROM BEING VAPORIZED!

WHY, JACK...! GLAD YOU WERE ABLE TO BREAK IN ON OUR CHANNEL. SAVES ME THE TROUBLE OF CONTACTING YOU!

YOU'RE WELCOME TO BEG FOR MERCY RIGHT UP TO THE SECOND WE OPEN FIRE, SMUGGLER.

I'M TOUCHED, RED-BEARD! BUT BEFORE YOU DO ANY BLASTING.. BETTER CHECK YOUR CRUISER'S NAVIGATION COMPUTER.

WHAT'S THAT CRAZY CORELLIAN UP TO NOW...?!

LUKE! GET THE DROIDS OUTSIDE,,, SEE IF ARTOO-DEETOO CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT GYRO CONTROL MODULE.

I'M TURNING DOWN THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM'S VOLUME..

"--THAT PIRATE SHIP IS GOING TO BE TRANSMITTING SOME VERY LOUD NOISE!"

WHAT--?!

GONE, CAP'N JACK! ALL GONE--

--EVERY CHART THAT WAS IN OUR NAVI-COMPUTER! AN' WITHOUT 'EM, WE'RE STUCK IN THIS SYSTEM!

UNLESS WE WANT TO CALCULATE HYPER-SPACE JUMPS BY GUESS-WORK... AN' CHANCE PLOWIN' INTO A NOVA OR WORSE!

THIS IS SOLO'S DOING! BUT HOW, BLAST IT...? HOW?!

WAM!

YOU MUST REMEMBER BACK WHEN WE WERE YOUR "GUESTS", JACK...! TO USE SOME OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S CHARTS, YOU PERMITTED MY FIRST MATE TO TAP OUR COMPUTER SYSTEM INTO YOURS..*

YOU WOULDN'T THINK ANY-ONE THAT BIG AND FURRY COULD BE A SNEAK...BUT CHEWIE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND TRANSFERRED ALL YOUR CHARTS INTO OUR COMPUTER!

*AS SHOWN WAY BACK IN ISSUES 11 & 12.--ARCHIE.

TO SPELL IT OUT FOR THE SLOWER STUDENTS ON YOUR BRIDGE, JACK... VAPORIZE US AND YOU VAPORIZE YOUR CHANCES OF EVER GETTING HOME AGAIN!

TOLD YOU I WAS BORN TRICKY, KIDS! NOW IF THE DROIDS HAVE ANY LUCK WITH THAT GYRO CONTROL MODULE--

--WE MAY EVEN GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE!

ARTOO-DEETOO, CAN'T YOU HURRY? I HATE SPACE TRAVEL WHEN I'M INSIDE A SHIP... THIS POSITIVELY CURDLES EACH OF MY CAPACITATORS!

VREEP ABOOT BIP!

THE MODULE IS BEYOND REPAIR...IT HAS TO BE REPLACED? I DON'T THINK THAT BODES WELL AT ALL, ARTOO!

AND MOST ABOARD THE FALCON WOULD AGREE...

...PARTICULARLY HAN!

JACK, I ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO FIGHT MY WAY TO WARP POINT... THEN BARGAIN WITH YOU FOR THE TREASURE YOU STOLE FROM ME.*

BUT RIGHT NOW, I NEED SOMETHING FROM YOUR CRUISER'S SUPPLIES ALMOST AS MUCH AS YOU NEED NAVIGATION CHART TAPES...! CAN WE MAKE EACH OTHER HAPPY?

I'M ALWAYS WILLING TO TRY, MISTER SOLO--

*AN INCIDENT FROM THE HISTORIC HAPPENINGS IN STAR WARS #7.--ARCH AGAIN.

AND AFTER A MAXIMUM OF HAGGLING, TERMS OF EXCHANGE ARE AGREED UPON...

HAN, HOW CAN YOU BE SURE CRIMSON JACK WON'T PULL A FAST ONE?

I'LL BE DISAPPOINTED IF HE DOESN'T, KID... LIFE OUGHT TO HAVE A FEW CONSISTENCIES!

NOW LOOK THE OTHER WAY--

--SO I CAN KISS THE PRINCESS GOOD-BYE WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY.

"TOO BAD," SAYS JACK, "I'VE ALWAYS BEEN RATHER FOND OF JOLLI. BUT A PULSE BEAM MIGHT INTERFERE WITH MY SIGNAL SYSTEM.

"TELL OUR LITTLE SPITFIRE SHE'LL HAVE TO MAKE IT ON HER OWN--"

...HE HAS A RENDEZVOUS IN SPACE.

WHILE ABOARD THE MASSIVE PIRATE CRUISER...

--AND ON MY SIGNAL, YOU'LL STRIKE!

CAP'N JACK! JOLLI'S ON THE COMMUNICATOR...! SAYS THAT SCRAPE WITH THE MILLENNIUM FALCON SENT HER SHIP OUT OF CONTROL--

--NOW IT'S BREAKIN' UP! SHE NEEDS A MAGNETIC PULSE BEAM TO HELP PULL 'ER BACK TO THE SHIP!

--IF SHE'S GOOD ENOUGH.

AND CRIMSON JACK SWIFTLY FORGETS ABOUT THE GIRL IN THE Y-WING FIGHTER...

YOU'RE WEARING A BLASTER, SOLO! WE BOTH AGREED... NO WEAPONS!

WE BOTH KNEW WE WERE LYING, REDBEARD. LET'S GET ON TO BUSINESS--

IT MAKES ME UNEASY OPERATING WITH JUST A BREATH MASK... EVEN IF WE ARE PROTECTED BY YOUR CRUISER'S MAGNETIC FIELD!

FULL ARMOR COULD HIDE ANYTHING FROM A PROTON GRENADE TO YOUR WOOKIEE FIRST MATE--

--THIS LEAVES MUCH LESS TO DOUBT! THE TAPE, PLEASE.

RIGHT! I ASSUME YOU HAVE A CONCEALED MICRO-SCANNER LIKE ME...TO MAKE CERTAIN YOU'RE GETTING THE REAL THING.

PITY WE COULDN'T BE PARTNERS, HAN... WE THINK SO MUCH ALIKE.

WE'D ALWAYS BE WORRIED THAT THE OTHER ONE WOULD THINK OF IT FASTER, JACK--

--LIKE NOW!

AND AS THE PIRATE JABS AT A STUD ON HIS HARNESS...

...HAN KICKS HIM IN THE CHEST AND JETS UPWARD TOWARD THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!

YOU WON'T MAKE IT, SMUGGLER... NOT ALIVE! THAT SIGNALLED FOR THE MAGNETIC FIELD TO BE TIGHTENED--

--NOW THERE'S A VACUUM BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SHIP!

AND A MAN UNARMORED IN THE VACUUM OF DEEP SPACE WILL FIND HIS BLOOD BOILING IN SECONDS!

AGAINST THAT ALTERNATIVE...THE FALCON'S SKIPPER ELECTS TO MAKE A HEROIC STAND!

LOOKS LIKE JACK CALLED OUT EVERY SPACE RAT WHO COULD CARRY A BLASTER!

NO QUESTION OF ESCAPE NOW, JUST HOW MANY CAN I GET--

--BEFORE THEY GET ME?!

YET AS HAN SOLO PREPARES TO **DIE**, A SHATTERED **Y-WING FIGHTER** LIMPS INTO VIEW, CANNONS **BLAZING**...

...AND A COLD **VOICE** ECHOING THROUGH EVERY INTER-COM!

IS **THIS** GOOD ENOUGH, CAP'N? **IS IT**?!

JOLLI! YOU LITTLE **TRAITOR**! YOU'RE BLASTING YOUR OWN **MATES**--

YOU'RE--

SHE'S SWERVIN' TOWARD THE SHIP'S **MUNITIONS DECK**, CAP'N! IF SHE'S STILL GOT **LIVE TORPEDOES**--

CRIMSON JACK TRIES TO THINK OF SOMETHING HE CAN SAY TO **STOP** THE GIRL, TO **REVERSE** WHAT'S **ALREADY** BEEN SAID...

...AND FINDS IT'S **TOO LATE**!

BAKWOM!

GONE! THE BEST PIRATING OPERATION IN THE **GALAXY**...! DESTROYED BECAUSE OF A **MAD WOMAN** AND A FAST-TALKING **CORELLIAN**!

I WAS FAR ENOUGH FROM THE BLAST TO **SURVIVE**... BUT EVERYONE ELSE IS **GONE**!

NOT **QUITE**, JACK--

--THANKS TO JOLLI, I'M STILL AROUND!

SOLO! I MIGHT'VE KNOWN IT'D COME DOWN TO JUST YOU AND ME--

NO, JACK--

--JUST ME!

THE REST IS A MATTER OF ARRANGING FOR ONE OF THE DROIDS TO PICK UP THE GYRO CONTROL MODULE...

...AND MAKING A SEARCH THROUGH THE WRECKAGE AND DEBRIS.

SHE CLAIMED TO HATE MEN. BUT WHERE YOU WERE CONCERNED, HAN, I HAD THE FEELING--

MAYBE SO.

LET'S GET MOVING, PEOPLE--

IT'S A LONG TRIP HOME!

THEN, IN THE GRADUALLY FADING ATMOSPHERE OF THE DYING CRUISER, AN UNHAPPY LADY NAMED JOLLI...

...RECEIVES HER FIRST--AND LAST--KISS.

NEXT ISSUE: THE HUNTER!

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ARCHIE GOODWIN WRITER/EDITOR • WALT SIMONSON and BOB WIACEK GUEST ARTISTS • DENISE WOHL LETTERER • BOB SHAREN COLORIST • JAMES SHOOTER CONSULTING EDITOR

the HUNTER!

HIS NAME IS VALANCE. HE AND THE BAND OF GALACTIC MERCENARIES WHO FOLLOW HIM ARE BOUNTY HUNTERS.

YET, NO ONE HERE HAS A PRICE ON THEIR HEAD.

FAST NOW! I WANT A CLEAN SWEEP... NO SURVIVORS!

VALANCE PAYS FOR THIS RAID HIMSELF. IT IS FITTING. HE HAS COME TO DESTROY HIS OWN PAST.

LG53

AND THAT IS UNFORTUNATE FOR ALL OTHERS AT THIS ISOLATED OUTWORLD MEDICAL STATION...

...PARTICULARLY IF THEY HAPPEN TO BE DROIDS.

GOOD GRIEF! THERE MUST BE SOME ERROR.

THIS FACILITY IS NEUTRAL. EVEN THE EMPIRE, RE--

SHUT UP, ...JUNK!

FADAK.

VALANCE EXPERIENCES REGRET. THERE'S NO TIME TO ENJOY THE SHOOTING.

JUNK! ALL HIS LIFE, HE'S HATED MECHANICALS... SERVILE CIRCUITRY COMPETING WITH MEN.

THE ATTITUDE IS COMMON AMONG MOST ORGANICS IN THE GALAXY...

...BUT FEW SHARE THE UNRELIEVED INTENSITY OF VALANCE'S FEELINGS!

WE'RE ROUNDING UP ALL THE ROBOT ORDERLIES, CAPTAIN.

YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, SLZZK.

THE HUTLARIAN FIRST MATE KNOWS EXACTLY...

...AND VALANCE CAN PROCEED CONFIDENTLY TO HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE.

VRA-KOOM!

WAIT! THIS IS JUST THE COMPUTER RECORD SECTION.

THERE ARE NO DRUGS... ANYTHING OF VALUE!

I'M WELL AWARE WHAT'S HERE, TECHNO.

VALANCE DOES NOT ANSWER. HE ACTS...

THEN, W-WHY...?

...AND IN THAT ACT, THE COMPUTER RECORDS SECTION OF THE TELOS-4 MEDICAL STATION...

SHTOOM!

BRAK

BRIIT

WUK!

...VANISHES!

ELSEWHERE, AS ONE BY ONE THE IN-PATIENT BAYS ARE INVADED...

...A SICK OLD MAN, LOST IN DELIRIUM, SPEAKS TO SHADOWS WITHIN HIS MIND.

BLAM!

YOU BRING MY LIGHTSABER...? GOOD! THEN DON-WAN KIHOTAY IS READY--

--READY TO FIGHT AGAIN, HAN SOLO! WHAT A TEAM WE WERE!* YOUR WOOKIEE FRIEND... THE LOVELY AMAIZA...

...JAXXON, THE LEPUS CARNIVOROUS ...AND, OF COURSE, THE BOY... THE BOY AND HIS DROID...

*IN STAR WARS 8-10.--ARCHIE.

CAPTAIN VALANCE! COME QUICKLY! WE'RE ON TO SOMETHING BIG!

BUT THE OLD WARRIOR HAS TIRED. HE DRIFTS INTO SILENCE.

YOU'RE CERTAIN WHAT HE SAID?

WE HEAR QUITE WELL, SIR... WHERE A LARGE BOUNTY IS CONCERNED!

THEN BACK TO THE SNIP ...WE'VE A NEW JOB AHEAD OF US!

PROTON CHARGES ALL SET CAP'N!

EVERYONE ABOARD FOR IMMEDIATE LIFT-OFF!

AS THE LIGHT CRUISER TAKES TO THE SKIES...

...A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS COMPLETE THE WIPING AWAY OF VALANCE'S PAST.

NOW HE CAN CONSIDER THE FUTURE... THE SATISFACTION AND CHALLENGE OF A NEW HUNT!

FEED THE INFORMATION INTO OUR COMPUTER, SLZZK. CONCENTRATE ON THE LEPUS CARNIVOROUS.

OF ALL THE LEADS TO SOLO, THE BOY, AND THE DROIDS --

"...A MAN-SIZE, MEAT-EATING GREEN RABBIT SHOULD BE EASIEST TO FIND!"

SURE YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND, AMAIZA?

NO THANKS, JAX.

THE HIGH LIFE ON THESE BACKWATER WORLDS CAN GET PRETTY LOW--

--I'LL OVERSEE THE SHIP'S REFUELING. DON'T GET YOUR EARS BURNED.

CUTE LADY... EVEN IF SHE DOESN'T HAVE FUR.

GOOD GAMBLER, TOO! MANAGED TO RUN UP OUR SMALL STAKES INTO ENOUGH TO GET MY OLD FREIGHTER RE-PAIRED AND--

HEY! WHAT IN THE HOLY HUTCH--?

IT IS AN ELECTRO-NET...

...CAPABLE OF SHOCKING MOST CREATURES INTO SUBMISSION...

...OR UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

AWAKENING FROM THE EXPERIENCE IS ALSO LESS THAN A PICNIC.

UH... I'D ASK WHAT'S UP, GUYS--

BUT IT FEELS LIKE I AM.

A NEGOTIABLE POSITION, RABBIT--

--ONCE YOU NAME THE PLANET WHERE YOU SERVED WITH HAN SOLO AND THE BOY WITH THE DROIDS.

SORRY, BALDY. I DON'T FINK ON FRIENDS.

NOW I CAN HURT HIM, RIGHT, FUD?

OF COURSE, DAFI... THAT'S WHY WE PUT THE AGONY INDUCER ON HIS EAR.

YEEEOOWW!

NAME THE PLANET, RABBIT. OUR LEADER, CAPTAIN VALANCE, IS WAITING... AND THERE'S UNIMAGINABLE BOUNTY AT STAKE!

BLOW IT OUT YER RETROS!

AGAIN, DAFI.

BLASTER FIRE!

VRAAP!

W-WHO...?

JUST A GIRL WHO CHANGED HER *MIND* ABOUT HOW TO SPEND THE *EVENING*.

NOW DON'T GO FOR YOUR *GUNS* OR--

I SAID DON'T!

AND THE ONE-TIME MEMBER OF THE IN-FAMOUS *BLACK HOLE GANG*...

...IS PERFECTLY *ABLE* TO BACK UP *ALL* SHE SAYS!

SOME *FUN*, EH, FUZZY? LIKE BEING BACK ON *ADUBA-3* WITH *HAN* AND THE GANG.

AMAIZA, I WUZ GETTIN' MY EARS WILTED *NOT* TO TELL 'EM THAT!

AW, *NO!*

IF ANY OF 'EM ARE STILL *KICKIN'*--

ONE IS...

BRAT!

AND WHEN A FAST *SHOT* ISN'T FAST ENOUGH TO *STOP* HIM...

...JAXXON AND AMAIZA TAKE SWIFTLY TO **SPACE** IN THE GOOD SHIP **RABBIT'S FOOT.**

DESTINATION: THE LITTLE-REGARDED RIMWORLD OF **ADUBA-3...**

...AND AN ISOLATED **VILLAGE** IN ITS VAST OUTBACK.

LOOKS LIKE WE BEAT THE **BAD GUYS!**

MAYBE WE'LL EVEN HAVE TIME TO FIGURE **WHY** THEY'RE **COMIN'** HERE! JABBA THE HUT PUT A PRICE ON **SOLO'S** HEAD--*

--BUT THOSE CREEPS ACTED LIKE THERE'S **ALSO** ONE ON OUR **OTHER** PAL--

*SEE **STAR WARS #2.** --ARCHIE.

"--**JIMM,** WHO CALLED HIMSELF THE **STARKILLER KID** WHEN HE AN' HIS ROBOT **EFFIE** THREW IN WITH US TO **DEFEND** THIS PLACE AGAINST LOCAL **BANDITS.**"*

ME? WANTED BY **BOUNTY HUNTERS?!**

*ISSUES 8, 9 & 10. --ARCH AGAIN.

PRETTY **FUNNY,** JAX! I'M AN OLD MARRIED **FARMER...** MERRI AN' I ARE EXPECTIN' OUR **FIRST BABY!** THERE'S **NO WAY--**

SOMEBODY THINKS THERE **IS,** KID! AN' RIGHT OR **WRONG--**

--**THEY'RE** THE KIND'A SWEETIES WHO'LL STOMP YOUR HOME INTO **DUST** JUST TO STAY IN **PRACTICE!**

UNLESS **WE** MAKE SOME **PLANS** ...AND **FAST!**

AMAIZA LOOKS TO THE SKY. NOTHING IS VISIBLE... YET.

APPROACHING THE ADUBA SYSTEM, CAPT. VALANCE.

TIME TO REVIEW THE TAPE... SO NO ONE IS MISTAKEN ABOUT WHAT OUR GOAL IS.

YET VALANCE'S OWN MIND DRIFTS ... BACK TO HIS LAST MOMENTS...

...SERVING THE EMPIRE IN AN OUTWORLD SKIRMISH...

MOMENTS WHEN HIS CAREER AS A STORM-TROOPER OFFICER OF RUTHLESS PROMISE...

...WAS ENDED BY A REBEL SERIAL TORPEDO.

HE SURVIVED THE BLAST... BUT BY A MARGIN SO NARROW, THE RETREATING IMPERIALS LEFT HIM AT THE TELOS-4 MEDICAL STATION TO DIE.

INSTEAD, TO HIS OWN REGRET ... HE WAS SAVED.

AT A PRICE... THE KNOWLEDGE HE COULD NEVER AGAIN STAND WITH PRIDE IN THE EMPIRE'S RANKS.

BUT THAT'S THE PAST... I'VE DESTROYED THAT! NOW THERE'S THE BOY. THE BOY AND HIS DROIDS...

BITTERLY, VALANCE PUNCHES THE TAPE INTO THE PLAYER, AND WAITS TO FEEL THE HATE...

...THE SAME HATE HE FELT ON **FIRST** VIEWING THIS TAPE TAKEN FROM A REBEL SPY SLAIN BY HIS MEN. IT IS AN ILLEGAL DUPE OF AN **IMPERIAL TRANSMISSION**, AND DETAILS...

...THE INCREDIBLE **ESCAPE** OF SENATOR AND PRINCESS **LEIA ORGANA** FROM THE **DEATH STAR!!**

THAT ONE PARTICIPANT, **HAN SOLO**, HAD A PRICE ON HIS HEAD...

...INTERESTED VALANCE, AS DID THE HINT THAT SITH LORD...

...DARTH VADER...

...WAS SOUNDLY **TESTED** BY...

...A STRANGE, **UNKNOWN** OLD MAN.

BUT IT WAS THE **BOY** WHO FIRED VALANCE'S **FURY**. FOR **HIS** PART WAS DONE WITH THE COOPERATION, INDEED, THE **FRIENDSHIP** OF TWO **DROIDS**! THE TAPE IMAGES **FADE**...

...BUT VALANCE'S REVULSION THAT **ANY** HUMAN WOULD **WILLINGLY** ALLY HIMSELF WITH **JUNK**... ONLY **GROWS!**

ADUBA-3, CAPTAIN.!

ALL RIGHT. WE **KNOW** WHAT WE'RE **LOOKING** FOR--

--AND THAT THE **EMPIRE** WILL GLADLY PAY SEVERAL **FORTUNES** IF WE **FIND** IT.!

YET, EVEN AS HE **SAYS** THIS, THE BOUNTY HUNTER **WONDERS**...

...IF HE WOULDN'T STALK THE DROID-LOVING YOUNG REBEL FOR **FREE**.

SIR, I'VE GOT A **VILLAGE** THAT FITS WITH OUR ACCUMULATED **DATA**--

--AND A **HEAT PARTICLE TRAIL** INDICATING A **SHIP** RECENTLY ARRIVED.

THE **RABBIT**... RUSHING TO **ALERT** HIS OLD FRIENDS. NO MATTER...

ALL HANDS SCRAMBLE!

EXPECT **LIGHT**-- BUT **DETERMINED**-- RESISTANCE.

CAPTAIN! THEY'RE BRINGING THE FIGHT TO **US**.

ONLY A **N-CLASS FREIGHTER** BY THE SENSORS, SO--

FULL SHIELDS **IMMEDIATELY!**

VALANCE'S SWIFTLY SHOUTED ORDER...

FRADOW!

...IS JUST AS SWIFTLY OBEYED.

IT SAVES HIS SHIP...

...IF NOT THE DIGNITY OF HIS CREW!

FOOLS!

THOSE INDEPENDENT STAR-HOPPERS ALWAYS MODIFY THEIR SHIPS--

--YOU CAN'T JUDGE THEM BY OFFICIAL CLASSIFICATIONS!

NO MORE THAN THEY CAN JUDGE US BY ONE QUICK ENCOUNTER!

NOT BAD, EH, GORGEOUS? HAN SOLO'D BE PROUD!

THE OL' RABBIT'S FOOT AIN'T IN HIS MILLENNIUM FALCON'S CLASS--

--BUT WE JUST MAY SETTLE THIS FRACAS RIGHT NOW--

--NOT EVEN NEED YOUR ORIGINAL PLAN, AMAIZA.

DREAM ON, GREEN EARS. THE WAY I READ THE SCANNER--

N-7

VEEROM!

--THIS IS WHERE THE CREAMING STARTS!

AS I SUSPECTED..

--THE RABBIT'S CRAFT HAS AUGMENTED SHIELDING.

ALL GUNNERS SHOULD ADJUST POWER LEVELS ACCORDINGLY--

--AND LOCK IN ON MY FIRING PATTERN.

--SO BEFORE STORMING THE VILLAGE IN SEARCH OF OUR QUARRY--

OUR YOUNG ROBOT-LOVER COULD WELL BE ABOARD THE FREIGHTER--

I WANT THAT SHIP!!

CRIPES! THINK'A HOW MANY STEAKS I COULD BUY FOR WHAT THAT PLATING WILL COST!

BUT UNDER POUNDING OF SUCH INTENSITY...

...THE HIGH COST OF HULL PLATING WOULD SEEM TO BE THE **LEAST** OF IT...

...AS THE **RABBIT'S FOOT** SUDDENLY **PLUNGES** TOWARD ADUBA-3'S SURFACE!

GOOD. LOOKS LIKE WE HIT THEM *JUST* HARD ENOUGH. I WANTED THEM *DOWN*... BUT *INTACT*.

THE EMPIRE WILL PAY FOR *BODIES*... BUT NOT UNRECOGNIZABLE *CRISPS*.

AS A **HAWK** PURSUES A **SPARROW**, THE LIGHT CRUISER FOLLOWS ITS **PREY**... DOWN TO A VAST SPRAWL OF **GRASSLAND**.

AN *OASIS AREA* AMID THIS PLANET'S ROCK AND SAND--

NO *WONDER* THE VILLAGERS CONSIDERED IT WORTHWHILE TO PAY SOLO AND HIS BAND TO *PROTECT* THIS.

NOTHING *STIRRING* ON THE FREIGHTER, CAP'N VALANCE.

THE *CRASH-LANDING* MAY HAVE DONE OUR WORK FOR US... BUT DON'T *COUNT* ON IT.

TAKE IN THE *FIRST SQUAD*, SLSSK... I'LL FOLLOW WITH THE *REST* OF THE CREW.

AND *REMEMBER*... IF THE *BOY'S* ABOARD, HE'S *MINE*!

BUT NO ONE IS ABOARD... AS VALANCE AND HIS MEN SWIFTLY FIND!

CAPTAIN! THEY'VE ABANDONED THEIR SHIP FOR THE TALL GRASS!

THAT SHOULD BRING THEM RUNNING!

CHA-WOOM!

YEAH. JUST PRAY JIMM AN' HIS VOLUNTEERS DELIVER ON THEIR END!

THIS IS IT! WISH HAN AND CHEWBACCA WERE HERE TO TAKE CHARGE.

BUT AT LEAST THEY TAUGHT US WE COULD FIGHT FOR WHAT'S OURS--

--LET'S SEE HOW WELL WE LEARNED!

BLAM!

THE SHOT ECHOES LOUDLY ACROSS THE PLAIN...

...ONLY TO BE FOLLOWED BY SOMETHING LOUDER YET.

T-THE GROUND...!

THIS PLACE ISN'T SUBJECT TO QUAKES. W-WHAT--?

BANTHAS!

THE CRAZY VILLAGERS HAVE STAMPEDED THEIR HERD!

AND THE HIGH, TANGLING GRASS IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO RUN IN...

...AS, ONE BY ONE, VALANCE'S BOUNTY HUNTERS HAVE THE MISFORTUNE TO DISCOVER.

I-IT'S...OVER. A TERRIBLE THING TO BEHOLD ...BUT IT SAVED OUR VILLAGE.

GIVE CREDIT TO JAXXON AND AMAIZA. THEY BOUGHT US TIME TO GATHER THE BANTHAS--

--THEN DRAW THOSE KILLERS DOWN HERE.

DON'T HAND OUT THE MEDALS YET, KID--

--THERE'S BOUND TO BE MORE WE AIN'T FLUSHED YET!

GOOD ADVICE, BUNNY!

AND YOU MADE THIS CHARACTER ITCHY ENOUGH TO SHOW HIMSELF!

FOOM!

THAT WAS SLSSK! THE FOOL SHOULD HAVE STAYED HIDDEN.

BUT WHILE THEIR ATTENTION IS ON HIM, I CAN-

FORGET REACHIN' YOUR SHIP--

AMAIZA ZAPPIN' YOUR MATE WASN'T SO FAS-CINATIN' THAT WE'D MISS YOU.

CAPTAIN VALANCE, CORRECT?

EVEN IF IT AIN'T... WE WANT ANSWERS.

LIKE: HOW COME YOU'RE AFTER OUR PAL JIMM'S HIDE?

YOU...?

YOU'RE THE BOY WHO FOUGHT IN HAN SOLO'S GROUP HERE...?

BUT... YOU'RE NOT THE ONE ON THE DEATH STAR TRANS-MISSION TAPE!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT IS! YOU'RE--

--AFTER THE WRONG BOY! BETWEEN MY OB-SESSION AND THE CREW'S GREED ... WE DID THIS ALL FOR NOTHING!

VALANCE DROPS HIS EMPTY BLASTER...

... AND LAUGHS. LONG AND HARD.

LEAVING THE STARTLED TRIO BEFORE HIM TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR WHAT HAPPENS WHEN...

ZOAK!

... THE LAUGHTER STOPS!

ENOUGH! SOLO'S DROID-LOVING YOUNG COMPANION IS SOMEWHERE IN THIS GALAXY--

--AND YOU THREE WON'T STAND BETWEEN ME AND FINDING HIM!

REFLEXES SEND THEM DIVING OUT OF THE MAIN BLAST...

...BUT SCARCELY **FAR** ENOUGH TO BE IN ANY SHAPE TO **HALT** THE BOUNTY HUNTER...

...AS HE CHARGES TO HIS NOW **CREW-LESS** SHIP...

...AND **BLASTS** AWAY...

...TOWARD THE **STARS!**

I-I'M NOT SURE WHAT **HAPPENED**... BUT IT **SEEMS** TO BE **OVER.**

YEAH, KID... I GUESS.

FOR **US.** FOR HAN'S FRIEND WITH THE **DROIDS**... I WONDER.

WHILE IN THE FLEEING CRAFT'S **COCKPIT**... VALANCE CLAWS COMPULSIVELY AT HIS **FACE.**

I **UNDERESTIMATED** THEM... SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAD TO USE THE **ARM.**

BUT I DID IT **SWIFTLY**... MY SECRET SHOULD STILL BE **SAFE.**

AND A TERRIBLE SECRET IT IS FOR A **ROBOT-HATER**...

...LIVING WITH THE FACT THAT AT THE **TELOS-4** MEDICAL STATION...

...HALF HIS BODY WAS **RE-PLACED** BY **CYBERNETIC PARTS!**

TERRIBLE. FOR BEING A **CYBORG** ONLY MAKES VANCE **MORE** DETERMINED... THAT THE **HUNT** SHALL GO **ON.**

NEXT ISSUE: THE **EMPIRE STRIKES!**

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CRUCIBLE!

AT THE CONTROLS OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON!! LUKE SKYWALKER, TAKING A LONE WATCH, SMILES...

TRUE, HE ONCE CALLED THIS SMUGGLING SHIP A PIECE OF JUNK... BUT THAT WAS BEFORE FIGHTING AND SERVING ABOARD HER.

EXULTING IN THE FEEL OF HER INSTRUMENTS, HE FINDS HIS MIND JOGGED BACK TO ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, ACROSS THE GALACTIC REACHES TO HIS HOMEWORLD...

ARCHIE GOODWIN WRITER/EDITOR	CHRIS CLAREMONT PLOT	HERB TRIMPE & ALLEN MILGROM GUEST ARTISTS	RICK PARKER LETTERER	MARIE SEVERIN COLORIST	JIM SHOOTER CONSULTING ED.

LG133

...TATOOINE!

ENDLESS MILES OF SAND-SWEPT DESERT AND ROCKY WASTELAND... BAKED BY THE GLARE OF TWIN SUNS.

A WORLD SEEMINGLY TOO HARSH, TOO BARREN TO SUSTAIN LIFE...

YET... LIFE IS HERE. AND IN GREAT VARIETY...

ALMOST AS VARIED...

...AS THE FORMS OF DEATH!

CHONK!

THE WOMP RAT PAUSES AND SNIFFS THE AIR...

THERE ARE LARGER PREDATORS ON TATOOINE, BUT NONE ANY MORE SWIFT OR CRUEL...

...OR INSTINCTIVELY AWARE THAT THIS LIFE/DEATH CYCLE...

VEEDOW!

...IS AS UNENDING AS THE ROCK AND SAND.

YEE-OWW!

WAIT'LL THE GANG HEARS ABOUT *THIS!* *ANY* OF 'EM MIGHT BULLSEYE A WOMP RAT FROM THEIR *SKYHOPPERS*--

--BUT I BET EVEN *BIGGS* NEVER MADE A ONE-HANDED SHOT WITH AN *ENERGY-RIFLE*--

--WHILE FIGHTING A *LANDSPEEDER'S* CONTROLS!

AND THE FACT THAT IN THAT FIGHT...

...HIS BANKING LANDSPEEDER ALMOST *FLIPPED OVER*...

...DOESN'T EVEN *PIERCE* YOUNG LUKE SKYWALKER'S ENTHUSIASM.

SHOOT! HOLES FILLING UP FROM *BELOW*... THE PACK IS SCATTERING *UNDERGROUND!*

PROTON GRENADES COULDN'T DIG 'EM OUT NOW!

AT LEAST *THIS ONE* WON'T BE GNAWING ANY VAPORATOR CABLES--

--AND THE *BOUNTY* ON HIM MIGHT BE ENOUGH FOR THOSE *MACRO-BINOCULARS* I'VE BEEN WANTING!

SATISFIED, LUKE STEERS TOWARD HOME...

...*UNAWARE* THAT HIS EVERY MOVEMENT HAS BEEN OBSERVED.

THESE WATCHERS TOO SEEM SATISFIED. TATOOINE'S LIFE/DEATH CYCLE EXTENDS NO *FURTHER*...

...FOR *NOW.*

AND THE BANTHA RAIDERS HAVE VANISHED INTO THE WILDS OF THE HOSTILE JUNDLAND WASTES...

...BY THE TIME THE LANDSPEEDER REACHES THE MAIN BUILDINGS OF THE LARS' MOISTURE FARM.

UNCLE OWEN! AUNT BERU!

I'M HOME!

LATE! AND WITHOUT THE REBUILT PARTS FOR OUR TREADWELL... EVEN THOUGH YOU TOOK ALL DAY!

I TRIED GIVING FIXER A HAND, UNCLE OWEN... BUT WITH HIS BACKLOG, HE SAYS IT'LL BE A WEEK BEFORE--

WITHOUT THAT DROID WE CAN'T INSTALL THOSE NEW VAPORATORS!

I KNOW, UNCLE OWEN. AND I KIND'A WONDERED--

BIGGS DARKLIGHTER'S LEAVING SOON FOR THE ACADEMY--

--AND TOMORROW, THE GANG'S PLANNING A SORT'A FAREWELL CELEBRATION. UNTIL THE DROID'S WORKING, I CAN'T DO MUCH SO--

SO IT'LL BE AN EXCUSE TO IDLE AWAY MORE TIME. LUKE, A WATER FARMER CAN'T--

OWEN, BIGGS IS LUKE'S BEST FRIEND.. HE'LL BE GONE A YEAR OR MORE. YOU LET A BROTHER LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING GOOD-BYE. HAVEN'T YOU WISHED--

ENOUGH, BERU--

YOU CAN GO, YOUNG MAN... BUT DON'T ASK FOR ANYTHING ELSE UNTIL WE HAVE A FUNCTIONING TREADWELL!

AND IF ANY VAPORATORS BREAK DOWN--

OH, THEY WON'T, SIR... I PROMISE!

GEE! I NEVER FIGURED UNCLE OWEN WOULD GIVE IN! WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN HIM AND MY FATHER?

ER... NOTHING REALLY, LUKE--

PERHAPS... OWEN JUST DEPENDED TOO MUCH ON YOUR FATHER STAYING WITH HIM ON THE FARM.

LIKE HE DOES NOW WITH ME.

WHENEVER I MENTION GOING TO THE ACADEMY LIKE BIGGS, HE--

HE CARES FOR YOU, LUKE... IN HIS OWN GRUFF WAY.

I GUESS I KNOW THAT... AND ALL HIS EFFORT ON THE FARM IS TO BUILD SOMETHING FOR US ALL.

MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A TRAITOR TO EVEN THINK ABOUT LEAVING, AUNT BERU--

STILL... SOME CRAZY PART OF ME KEEPS FEELING LIKE THERE SHOULD BE MORE...!

MAYBE I'M JUST AFRAID TO GROW UP--

--TO FACE RESPONSIBILITY LIKE UNCLE OWEN.

WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?

TO HER REGRET BERU LARS' ONLY ANSWER IS SILENCE.

TATOOINE'S DUAL SUNSET PASSES... AND NIGHT COMES TO THE ISOLATED FARM...

WHERE IN THE COMPLEX'S GARAGE, LUKE COMPLETES A TUNE-UP...

THERE! THE OL' SKY-HOPPER IS READY AN' RARIN'!

LET ME JUST CHECK THE CONTROLS A LAST TIME--

SINCE I DIDN'T MENTION TO UNCLE OWEN THAT THIS CELEBRATION IS AT BEGGAR'S CANYON--

--EVERYTHING'S GOT TO BE TIP TOP. I DON'T WANT TO BRING BACK A WRECK!

IT DOESN'T OCCUR TO LUKE THAT HE MIGHT NOT COME BACK FROM A WRECK. HE IS YOUNG. HIS OWN MORTALITY SEEMS A DISTANT THING...

... AND HIS THOUGHTS ARE RACING ELSEWHERE.

HE SQUINTS HIS EYES, GRIPS THE CONTROLS, AND CEASES TO BE LUKE SKYWALKER, TATOOINE FARM BOY...

EXTERNAL PRESSURE INLET

... IN HIS MIND'S DREAMING EYE, HE IS COMMANDER LUKE SKYWALKER, LEADING A FLIGHT OF STAR-FIGHTERS INTO COMBAT.

EMERGENCY VILLAGE WARNING

NOW THE ENEMY DESTROYER LOOMS BEFORE HIM. A RAIDER, A SLAVER... TRYING TO ESCAPE WITH ITS LIVING CARGO!

TRYING... AND FAILING.

SKYWALKER AGAIN! HE'S THE ONE WHO STOPPED US IN THE STYX SYSTEM.

THAT'S HIS LAST SUCCESS! HE MAY HAVE BOARDED US SWIFTLY... BUT HE'S GOING TO DIE JUST AS FAST!

BUT IN THIS BLASTER DUEL...

...DEADLY SKILL, NOT TALK, DETERMINES THE WINNER.

AND WHEN QUARTERS ARE TOO CLOSE FOR SHOOTING...

... A FIST CAN BE DEADLY, TOO... AS THE SLAVE SHIP CAPTAIN SOON LEARNS!

THEN, IT IS OVER. EXCEPT FOR A LOVELY HOSTAGE'S GRATITUDE...

... AND THE PROMISE OF EVEN GREATER ADVENTURES TO COME...

... ANOTHER DAY.

--LUKE? LUKE! HAVE YOU GONE DEAF--?

--OR FALLEN ASLEEP?

I'VE BEEN YELLING FOR THE LAST FIVE MINUTES... I'M SHUTTING DOWN THE EXTERNAL POWER.

UH...SORRY, UNCLE OWEN. I GUESS I GOT...UH... WRAPPED UP IN MY WORK.

IF YOU'D PUT AS MUCH DEDICATION INTO MAINTAINING OUR VAPORATORS--

--WE'D HAVE THE RICHEST MOISTURE FARM ON THE PLANET.

I'M SURE GONNA TRY, UNCLE OWEN... YOU'LL SEE, AFTER TOMORROW.

BEGGAR'S CANYON. ANY ADULT ON TATOOINE WILL TELL YOU TO AVOID THIS TWISTING, MILE-DEEP TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF EROSION.

ANY TEENAGER WILL TELL YOU IT'S THE ONLY PLACE ON A DULL, BACKWATER WORLD...

...TO FIND A FEW THRILLS.

IF YOU DON'T MIND RISKING THE FAMILY SKYHOPPER... AND MAYBE YOUR OWN NECK.

HEY, BIGGS! OVER HERE!

I SEE YOU WAGGLING YOUR WINGS, HOTSHOT. GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT.

BUT JUST CAUSE THIS IS THE LAST GET-TOGETHER OF THE TWO SHOOTING STARS--

"--DON'T EXPECT ANY **BREAKS** WHEN THE **RUN** BEGINS!"

LUKE **DOESN'T.** AND IT SEEMS NONE WILL BE **NECESSARY.** AS THE STARTING SIGNAL IS GIVEN, HE **POWER DIVES** FOR THE YAWNING CANYON MOUTH...

...TO GRAB THE **LEAD** INTO THE SNAKING, TWO-MILE STRETCH OF SHEER-WALLED **NIGHTMARE.**

AT ITS **FAR END** LIES THE AREA'S LARGEST **WOMP RAT BURROW**...FOR A GOOD REASON. THE ONLY **SHOOTING APPROACH** IS **THROUGH** THE LABYRINTH THAT IS BEGGAR'S CANYON...

...WHERE EACH **BEND,** EACH **TURN,** IS MORE IMPOSSIBLE THAN THE LAST...

...AND **MANEUVERING ROOM** MAY BE DETERMINED...

...BY HOW MANY COATS OF **PAINT** YOUR 'HOPPER HAS!

SKY-WALKER AND DARK-LIGHTER KEEP **LEAP-FROGGIN'** FOR FIRST PLACE--

ON *THESE* CURVES, THE ONLY SPOT THAT LEAVES A ***RUNNER UP*** IS AGAINST THE ROCKS--

--OR **OUT!**

IT IS A **CHOICE** MADE BY MORE AND MORE PARTICIPANTS...

...AS EACH NEW TURN PROVES **NARROWER.** UNTIL...

... ONLY TWO SHIPS REMAIN!

GANGWAY, HOTSHOT, I'M MAKING MY MOVE!

JUST LIKE I FIGURED, BIGGS, OL' BUDDY--

--JUST A HAIR TOO EARLY! THERE'S STILL TIME FOR ME TO JUMP YOU BEFORE THE LAST TURN--

--AND NO ROOM FOR YOU TO OVERTAKE ME AFTER THAT!

BUT AS LUKE STARTS...

WHAT TH--?! HE'S BRAKIN' WITH HIS RETROS!

BIGGS, YOU TRICKY SON OF A GUN!

I'VE GOT NO CHOICE--

--PULL UP OR COLLIDE!

THEN DARKLIGHTER'S SKYHOPPER IS AROUND THE TURN...

... GROUND-CHARGE MISSILES SCORING ON WOMP RATS...

...BEFORE HIS SHIP STEERS UPWARD...

...TO ESCAPE STONE COLD DISASTER BY MILLI-METERS!

WAY TO GO, BIGGS! I WOULDN'T HAVE DARED TRY WHAT YOU DID.

GUESS THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HEADED FOR THE ACADEMY AND I'LL PROBABLY STAY ON THE MOISTURE FARM.

THE THOUGHT TROUBLES LUKE FOR A MOMENT... BUT IT IS SOON FORGOTTEN IN THE REVELRY THAT FOLLOWS EVERY CANYON RUN...

LOOK SHARP, CAMIE... HERE THEY COME. "TWO SHOOTING STARS THAT CAN'T BE STOPPED!"

THAT'S WHAT WE ALWAYS SAY, DEAK--

-- AND I DIDN'T SEE ANYONE ELSE PROVING US WRONG TODAY.

THE BANTER IS LONG, LOUD, AND MOSTLY GOOD-NATURED...

LEAVING ANY HARD FEELINGS TO SOME LOCAL JAWAS...

...ANNOYED THAT THERE ARE NO WRECKS TO SCAVENGE.

SO IT GOES. UNTIL...

HEY!

SPEEDER'S ON FIRE...GOING TO CRASH! LET'S GET TO IT FAST!

AND... BIGGS, HE'S A MILITIA SCOUT!

EASY, MISTER... YOU'RE OKAY NOW.

N-NO! GOT TO WARN EVERYONE! BIG TROUBLE...!

TUSKEN RAIDERS ON THE RAMPAGE!..! LOT OF 'EM... MAD AS ROCK HORNETS!

A SUPPLY CARAVAN ACCIDENTALLY POLLUTED ONE OF THEIR SACRED WELLS...!

WHAT KIND OF FOOLS WOULD DO THAT?

FOOLS SMUGGLING BLASTERS...SAND PEOPLE GOT THE SMUGGLERS AND THE GUNS!

THEY'RE WELL-ARMED AND ANGRY ENOUGH TO HIT ANCHORHEAD AND ANY FARMS INBETWEEN!..! THEY WEREN'T FAR BEHIND ME SO--

FTOOM!

EVERYONE TO COVER... THEY'RE HERE!

WINDY, ANY LUCK WITH THE COMMUNICATOR?

TOO MUCH ATMOSPHERIC INTERFERENCE!

GOTTA WAIT TILL THE SUNS ARE LOWER.

BY THAT TIME, THE MAIN PARTY COULD BE IN ANCHORHEAD

THE GANG'S HANDLING THIS FINE, LUKE--

YOU GAME TO TRY FOR ONE OF THE 'HOPPERS?

WHEN MY UNCLE'S PLACE IS ONE OF THOSE IN DANGER? TRY AN' STOP ME!

I DON'T THINK THE SAND PEOPLE NEED ANY HELP!

AND ONE IN PARTICULAR...

...SEEMS TO HAVE ANTICIPATED THIS VERY MOVE!

BIGGS!

BLAST THEM AND THEIR ABILITY TO POP UP OUT OF NOWHERE!

MOVE AWAY FROM ME, LUKE--

-- SO INSTEAD OF SWINGING THAT GADERFFI HE'LL BE FORCED TO THROW I--

=WNGHHH!=

NO!

BRAKKON!

G-GOOD SHOOTIN', HOTSHOT..! HE ONLY GOT MY SHOULDER--

--BUT FROM THE WAY I F-FEEL... THAT POINT MAY HAVE BEEN DIPPED IN SAND BAT VENOM.

HANG ON, BIGGS--

--I'LL HAVE YOU TO A MEDI-DROID BEFORE THAT STUFF CAN DO ANY DAMAGE.

I'M BOOSTING US STRAIGHT UP AND OUT OF HERE!

NO, LUKE... STAY LOW! THEY'RE BETTER ARMED THAN USUAL, REMEMBER?

TRY FOR ALTITUDE AND WE'RE A SITTING DUCK FOR THEIR LONG RANGE BLASTERS!

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STAY DOWN... GO THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS...'STEAD'A OVER THEM...!

THROUGH...?! BIGGS, THERE'S NO WAY EXCEPT--

Y-YEAH. DIABLO CUT! NO ONE'S EVER DONE IT BEFORE... PROBABLY FOR THE GOOD REASON THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE...!

BUT IF WE TAKE TIME TO GO THE LONG WAY 'ROUND... SOME FARMS AND PART OF ANCHORHEAD MAY NOT BE WAITING!

AND YOU HAVEN'T MENTIONED YOURSELF, BIGGS--

--THAT THE POISON IN YOUR SYSTEM COULD TAKE EFFECT BEFORE THAT LONG TRIP'S DONE!

OKAY, MR. DARKLIGHTER... DIABLO CUT IT IS!

SOMEBODY'S GOTTA BE FIRST... WHY NOT US?

ONLY TROUBLE IS... UP TO NOW, I'VE BEEN A MOISTURE FARMER WHO PLAYS AROUND WITH A SKYHOPPER--

--AND DAYDREAMS ABOUT BEING A STAR PILOT! THIS IS GOING TO TAKE FAR MORE THAN THAT--

--AND THERE'S NO REASON TO BELIEVE I'VE GOT IT!

THEN...

THERE IS NO MORE TIME TO THINK...

... AS THE VULNERABLE LITTLE CRAFT SAILS INTO THE HEART OF DIABLO CUT!

HERE, THERE CAN BE NO HESITATION. EVERYTHING RIDES ON REACTION AND INSTINCT...

BOY AND SKYHOPPER MUST BE-COME AS ONE...

...OR LOSE ALL.

LUKE...!

I... MUST'VE BEEN... CRAZY... TO GET YOU INTO THIS...

...IT CAN'T BE... DONE...!! IT...

BIGGS FAINTS. BUT IF LUKE HAS HEARD HIS DELIRIOUS WHISPER, IT DOESN'T SHOW...

...AS HE PUSHES STEADILY ON INTO THE EROSION-CARVED CHAOS OF THE CUT...

...FINALLY SOARING INTO CAVERN DARKNESS!

BUT AT ITS END IS LIGHT. LIGHT AND THE PROMISE OF...

OPEN SKY ABOVE US, BIGGS! WE'RE THROUGH--

EXCEPT FOR...

...A TUSKEN RAIDER SCOUTING PARTY!

SURPRISE FAVORS THE SKYHOPPER... IN THE SAND PEOPLES' MEMORIES, NO MACHINE HAS EVER ROARED OUT OF THE DIABLO CUT!

STILL...

WE'RE CATCHING SOME OF THOSE SHOTS IN THE AFTER-BURNER--

SHE'S BOUND TO CATCH FIRE!

AND AS THE LARS MOISTURE FARM LOOMS ON THE HORIZON...

...THE FLAMES ARE THERE!

IF I CAN PLOW'ER INTO THE SAND, MAYBE-- JUST MAYBE--

-- WE WON'T EXPLODE!

KA-WUMP!

LUKE! HAVE YOU GONE MAD, YOUNG MAN?!

GET A MED-PACK FOR BIGGS, UNCLE OWEN... AN' HAVE AUNT BERU CALL OUT THE LOCAL MILITIA FAST!

AND SUDDENLY... LUKE SKY-WALKER IS VERY TIRED.

TWILIGHT. IT IS OVER. WITH THE MILITIA'S ARRIVAL, THE TUSKEN RAIDERS ARE SWIFTLY TURNED BACK INTO THE JUNDLAND WASTES.

LUKE STANDS ALONE. THINKING. THINKING OF DIABLO CUT... OF THE WAY HE SOMEHOW REACHED DEEP WITHIN HIMSELF THERE AND DID THE IMPOSSIBLE.

I-IT WAS AL MOST LIKE SOME KIND OF... TEST. AND WHATEVER ELSE COMES OUT OF TODAY--

-- I FEEL LIKE I PASSED IT.

AND WITH THAT PASSING, LUKE KNOWS HE CAN NEVER BE A FARMER. HE HAS BRIEFLY TOUCHED THE STUFF OF HIS DREAMS AND FOUND THEM POSSIBLE. SOMEWAY, SOMEHOW... KNOWS HE MUST REACH OUT AGAIN.

AND, OF COURSE, HE WILL. RELUCTANTLY AT FIRST, AS EVENTS BEYOND HIS HOME PLANET CONSPIRE...

...TO SWEEP HIM INTO THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF ALL!

AN ADVENTURE WHICH REACHES A CHILLING HEIGHT WITH THE BATTLE OF THE DEATH STAR...

...BUT ONE WHICH STILL CONTINUES EVEN NOW. CONTINUES...AND GROWS.

HEY, KID! DON'T TURN SPACE HAPPY ON ME!

OH...HAN! NO PROBLEM... I WAS JUST THINKING.

PRETTY DEEP STUFF IT LOOKED LIKE. SORRY I'M LATE RELIEVING YOU.

COULDN'T RESIST GRABBING A FEW EXTRA WINKS.

YOU MUST BE SCREAMIN' TO GET CLEAR OF THAT SEAT.

HOURS AT THE CONTROLS IN DEEP SPACE CAN BE PRETTY BORING.

MAYBE SOME DAY, HAN. MAYBE IN YEARS--

BUT RIGHT NOW... I'M EXACTLY WHERE I WANT TO BE!

NEXT ISSUE: THE HAND OF THE EMPIRE!

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THERE'S THE WOUNDED REBEL SPY! *VAPORIZE* HIM AND THE DROIDS!

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the EMPIRE STRIKES!

HYPER-SPACE! UNDER FULL WARP DRIVE, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON THREADS ITS WAY TOWARD THE MOONS OF YAVIN.

ALL ABOARD THE SMUGGLING SHIP ARE TIRED. A MULTITUDE OF ADVENTURES LIE BEHIND THEM. EACH HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL.

IT IS A TIME OF GREAT VULNERABILITY...

PRINCESS LEIA! CAPTAIN SOLO! COME QUICKLY! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO MASTER LUKE!

LG:133

KEEP AN EYE ON THE *INSTRUMENTS*, CHEWIE...! PARTICULARLY THAT *AUTO-NAVIGATOR*--

--IT'S BEEN SHOWING SOME *DRIFT*.

WHAT EXACTLY *IS* IT, THREEPIO?

I-I... DON'T KNOW HOW TO *ASSESS* IT, YOUR HIGHNESS. HE *APPEARS* TO HAVE JUST--

--*SHUT DOWN!*

HEY... C'MON! *DROIDS* SHUT DOWN... *HUMANS* DON'T!

ALL MY INFOR-MATION STORAGE CIRCUITS *CONFIRM* THAT, SIR--

--BUT TO MY PHOTO-CELL RECEPTORS, HE *STILL* HAS THE APPEARANCE OF BEING *SHUT DOWN!*

LUKE!

FREEP?

DOOT?

QUIT SCARIN' US, KID. C'MON... SNAP OUT OF IT!

HE CAN'T HEAR YOU, HAN. IT'S AS THOUGH HE WERE IN A TRANCE... OR STATE OF SHOCK.

BRING THE MED-PACK, THREEPIO!

NO USE! IT DOESN'T REGISTER ANYTHING PHYSICALLY WRONG. HIS LIFE FUNCTIONS ARE SLOWED... BUT STILL STABLE.

THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME EX-PLANATION...!

THREEPIO, WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THIS HAPPENED?

HERE, SIR. MASTER LUKE MAY NOT BE SHUT DOWN, BUT I DEFINITELY WAS. SO I CAN'T--

ARTOO! MUST YOU JIGGLE AND BLEEP SO?

FRADEET GLOOP!

I'LL THANK YOU TO KEEP A CIVIL AUDIO-AMPLI-FIER IN YOUR HOUSING DOME!

BUT DESPITE HIS INSULTS, IT IS GOOD NEWS! HE RECORDED THE WHOLE THING!

IT APPEARS MASTER LUKE WANTED A VISUAL CHECK OF HIS LIGHT-SABER PRAC-TICE AND--

GREAT! HAVE ARTOO TAP INTO OUR TRANSCEIVER SYSTEM... FAST!

AND IN MOMENTS, THE LITTLE DROID'S RECORDING IS ON THE FALCON'S COMMUNICATOR SCREEN...

;OWWW!; BLAST IT... MY TIMING'S OFF!

I'M NOT FEELING THE FORCE... CAN'T SEEM TO CLEAR MY MIND!

PZAK!

BEN KENOBI DIDN'T HAVE VERY **LONG** TO INSTRUCT ME IN THE WAYS OF THE **FORCE**, BUT THERE WAS AN **EXERCISE**-- A KIND OF **MEDITATION**--HE MENTIONED.

MAYBE IF IT ISN'T COMING **TOGETHER**... I SHOULD TRY **THAT**.

KEEP **TAPING**, ARTOO... LET'S SEE IF I GET **THIS** RIGHT.

A **JEDI KNIGHT** LIKE BEN WAS WAY **BEYOND** THIS KIND OF THING... BUT HE SAID IT WOULD HELP **ME** GROW MORE ATTUNED TO THE **FORCE**.

OKAY. EYES **CLOSED**... DRAW IN ON YOURSELF... SHUT OUT THE **PHYSICAL**.

JUST TRY TO **FEEL**... TO LET YOUR MIND **DRIFT FREE**.

DRIFT **FREE**... BEYOND THE **SHIP**. OPEN... FREE... AMONG THE **STARS**... ALONE.

NO... **NOT** ALONE. SOMETHING... **COMING**. SOMEONE... **BEN**...? BEN, IT IS --

NO!

T-THAT **CRY** TOUCHED MY **EMERGENCY REACTIVATOR**--

THE NEXT THING I **BEHELD** WAS MASTER LUKE --

--**SHUT DOWN!**

WILL YOU STOP SAYING THAT, CIRCUIT-DOME?! THE KID JUST SCARED HIMSELF WITH THAT FORCE MUMBO-JUMBO... ANY MINUTE HE'LL PROBABLY COME AROUND ON HIS OWN.

I HOPE.

BUT WE CAN'T BE SURE. AND IF WE'RE WRONG --

NO NEED TO SPELL IT OUT. LET'S JUST FIND SOME ADVANCED MEDICAL HELP... FAST.

CONSIDERING OUR POPULARITY WITH THE EMPIRE... THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASY.

PRINCESS, NOBODY KNOWS THE INS-AND-OUTS OF THIS GALAXY BETTER THAN A SPICE SMUGGLER--

-- AND NOBODY'S A BETTER SPICE-SMUGGLER THAN ME! YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, YOUR ROYALNESS!

THEN WHY AM I STILL WORRIED?

BUT HAN'S FINGERS ARE ALREADY DEFTLY MOVING OVER THE SHIP'S COMPUTER, READJUSTING FOR...

... THE DROP BACK TO SUB-LIGHT SPEED. AND... TROUBLE!

ATTENTION, FREIGHTER... ATTENTION! YOU ARE MAKING UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY INTO A MILITARY CONTAINMENT ZONE OF THE EMPIRE.

PREPARE FOR IMMEDIATE BOARDING AND FULL INSPECTION!

THANK YOU FOR CLEARING ONE THING UP, MISTER SOLO... NOW I KNOW WHY I'M STILL WORRIED!

HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING?

THE AUTO-NAVIGATOR! I FORGOT TO CORRECT FOR THE DRIFT IT'S BEEN SHOWING!

WE'RE IN THE RIGHT QUAD-RANT BUT THE WRONG SECTOR!

I'D HATE TO THINK SOMETHING THAT STUPID MIGHT BECOME MY EPITAPH!

IT WON'T, YOUR WORSHIP! I'VE ALWAYS GOT AN EMERGENCY PLAN!

I DREAD ASKING, BUT... WHAT IS IT?

VEEBROOMM!

WHY THAT'S REALLY WONDERFUL! EXCEPT WHEN THAT TIE FIGHTER DOESN'T CHECK IN, EVERY EMPIRE CRAFT IN THE ZONE WILL BE LOOKING FOR HIM--

--AND US!

VERY SIMPLE--

--GET THEM BEFORE THEY GET YOU!

I DON'T PLAN TO BE HERE WAITING FOR THEM, LADY! HOPEFULLY, WE'LL BE ACROSS THE ZONE AND--

RONK!

CHEWIE! W-WHAT--?

IT'S A PRIVATE MERCHANT SHIP--! SOMEONE'S SCUTTLED IT GOOD... AND RECENTLY!

CARRIES HOUSE OF TAGGE MARKINGS... CAN'T BELIEVE THE EMPIRE WOULD LET THIS HAPPEN TO AN OUTFIT WITH THEIR INFLUENCE!

PARTICULARLY NOT IN AN IMPERIAL CONTAINMENT ZONE, HAN!

THAT FIGHTER CAME FROM THIS DIRECTION... WHY WASN'T IT AFTER WHOEVER DID THIS INSTEAD OF BOTHERING WITH US?

WHO KNOWS, PRINCESS? THOSE EMPIRE TROOPERS TEND TO GO BY THE BOOK EVEN WHEN--

GRROWRT!

SOMETHING ON THE SCOPE, CHEWIE?

A FLOATER FROM THE WRECKAGE...! SENSORS INDICATE HE'S STILL ALIVE.

AND THAT'S REBEL ARMOR HE'S WEARING! HAN, YOU'VE GOT TO PICK HIM UP!

THE FALCON IS SLOWED, THEN MANEUVERED **CLOSE** TO THE DRIFTING FIGURE. UNTIL...

GOT HIM, PRINCESS... BUT HE'S IN **BAD SHAPE.**

LAY HIM DOWN OVER **HERE!** THREEPIO, WE'LL NEED THE **MED-PACK** AGAIN--

N-NO... **TOO LATE...! EMPIRE** SAW TO THAT WHEN THEY **FORCED** US ABOARD THE MER-CHANT SHIP... BEFORE **DESTROYING** IT...!

HE'S **DELIRIOUS...** THE EMPIRE WOULDN'T HIT A **TAGGE** FAM-ILY SHIP... ONE BROTH-ER'S AN **IMPERIAL FLEET COMMANDER!**

BUT... IT'S... **TRUE...!** DON'T KNOW... **WHY...** BUT THEY WANTED IT TO LOOK LIKE... A **REBEL RAID...!**

WE WERE **PRISONERS...** TAKEN DURING FIGHT-ING IN ANOTHER SYS-TEM...! BROUGHT **HERE** SO... OUR **BODIES** WOULD MAKE SCHEME **CONVINCING...!**

SOMEONE'S GONE TO A LOT OF EFFORT TO MAKE THE **ALLIANCE** LOOK BAD.

HAN, WHERE WERE YOU **TAKING** US...? COULD THE SCUTTLED SHIP BE FROM THE **SAME PLACE?**

PRINCESS, I HATE TO **INTERRUPT,** BUT ACCORDING TO **CHEWBACCA--**

--WE'RE IN MORE **TROUBLE** THAN EVER!

ATTENTION, FREIGHTER! YOUR PRESENCE HERE PLACES YOU UNDER SUSPICION OF **PI-RACY** AND/OR **ACTS OF REBELLION.**

HEAVE TO **INSTANTLY...** OR WE WILL **OPEN FIRE!**

FULL ENGINES, CHEWIE!

KRONK

IT'S RUN FOR YOUR LIFE TIME!

ATTA BOY, BIG BUDDY! IT'S ONLY A LIGHT CRUISER... NOT IN THE FULL STAR-DESTROYER CLASS!

WHOOOM!

WITH A LITTLE LUCK, WE MAY EVEN MAKE IT!

AND ACROSS THE BRIGHT GALACTIC STAR-FIELD, A WILD AND DESPERATE CHASE BEGINS...

HANG TIGHT, EVERY-ONE! OUR REAR DE-FLECTORS ARE TAKING A BEATING... BUT WE'RE STARTING TO LEAVE 'EM BEHIND!

WHILE ON THE PURSUING CRAFT'S BRIDGE...

COMMANDER STROM! THAT FREIGHTER MAY LOOK LIKE JUNK... BUT IT'S GRAD-UALLY OUTDISTANCING US! THE COM-PUTER ESTIMATES--

IT CANNOT ESTIMATE HOW WELL THE FREIGHT-ER FITS INTO IMPERIAL PLANS.

WE HAVE TIE FIGHTERS ON PATROL... ORDER THEM TO CUT IT OFF BEFORE IT'S OUT OF THE ZONE.

AND SOON, THE VOID AHEAD OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON IS SUDDENLY FILLED BY...

TIE SHIPS! THE NEW IMPROVED MODELS! THE EMPIRE'S PLAYIN' HAMMER AND ANVIL, CHEWIE--

GROWRRL!

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL... WE'RE WHAT GETS POUNDED ON IN BETWEEN!

SO LET'S NOT STAY THERE!

THAT FREIGHTER'S MANEUVERING LIKE A FIGHTER, COMMANDER STROM--

--IT'S LEFT THE TIES AND US FIRING AT EACH OTHER!

AND WITH MORE THAN YOUR USUAL ACCURACY! REORDER FIRE PATTERNS, FOOL! AND STAY WITH THOSE FUGITIVES--

--THEY'RE HEADED OUT OF THE ZONE!

THOSE EMPIRE SHIPS ARE REGROUPING, HAN... MOVING IN AGAIN!

NO PROBLEM, YOUR ROYALNESS! WE CONFUSED 'EM JUST LONG ENOUGH--

--OUR SANCTUARY'S IN SIGHT!

HAN! T-THAT'S THE WHEEL!

ITS SIZE MAKES IT APPEAR CLOSER THAN IT IS. BUT THE WHEEL'S REPUTATION DOES NOT REST ON ITS SIZE. THERE ARE OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE GALAXY LARGER, MORE AWESOME...

THE WHEEL IS A MONUMENT. A MONUMENT TO PLEASURE, TO RISK, TO GREED. AND, TO THOSE WITH THE NEED OR THE DESPERATION... IT IS ALSO A MONUMENT TO LIFE AND DEATH.

MY FATHER FOUGHT THE BUILDING OF THIS PLACE WHEN HE WAS A SENATOR! IT'S DE-GRADING, IT'S BAR-BARIC, IT'S--

IT'S THE ULTIMATE GAMBLING PALACE, PRINCESS. THE STAKES ARE HIGH... BUT MOST GALACTIC CITIZENS WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!

AND SINCE IT'S ONE OF THE FEW PLACES WHERE STORM-TROOPERS AREN'T PERMITTED TO POKE THEIR HELMETED LITTLE HEADS... COUNT ME AS A BOOSTER!

COMMANDER STROM, WE ARE NOW WELL OUT OF OUR CONTAINMENT ZONE AND INTO THE WHEEL'S IMMUNITY SPHERE. REGU-LATIONS STATE--

REGULATIONS ARE MERELY TOOLS FOR A CREATNE AND AGGRESSIVE LEADER! RETURN TO YOUR PATROL! I'M PROCEEDING AFTER THE FUGITIVES!

THE WHEEL'S SANCTUARY IS A COURTESY OF THE EMPIRE. AS THE EMPIRE'S CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE IN THIS SECTOR, I ELECT TO WITHDRAW THAT COURTESY--

--UNTIL OUR TROOPERS FIND AND SLAY EVERY BEING ON THAT FREIGHTER!

ROWWK

I CAN READ THE SCOPE, TOO, CHEWIE! THAT CRUISER AIN'T GIVIN' UP! BETTER STRAP IN, YOUR WORSHIP--

--THIS IS GONNA BE A REAL QUICK DOCKING!

LEAN ON THE RETROS, CHEWIE!

FWOOM!

FREIGHTER, THIS IS A RESERVED BAY! YOU BELONG ON AN EXTERIOR DOCKING GANTRY AND--

FREIGHTER, YOUR APPROACH IS TOO FAST!

ALL PERSONNEL! OUT OF THE BAY!

BARRK!

WATTA YOU MEAN, WE CUT IT TOO CLOSE?

ANYTHING SHY OF THE BAY WALL IS A GREAT LANDING!

LET'S GO, PRINCESS! WE MADE IT!

I'M AFRAID ONE OF US DIDN'T, HAN!

CHEWIE, TAKE HIS BODY WITH YOU. WE'LL SPLIT UP FOR NOW AND MEET LATER AT THE CRIMSON CASINO LOUNGE.

PRINCESS, YOU'LL GO WITH ME AND THE DROIDS CAN GET LUKE TO THE HOSPITAL FACILITIES.

NO! WE CAN'T ABANDON LUKE IN HIS CONDITION!

LADY, YOU'RE A KNOWN LEADER OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE! WITH THE EMPIRE HOT ON OUR HEELS, LUKE'S MUCH SAFER WITH TWO ANONYMOUS DROIDS!

NOW MOVE! ONCE WE'RE SAFE IN THE UPPER LEVELS, I'LL STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT WITH WHEEL AUTHORITIES.

THOUGH IT'S HARD TO ADMIT, LEIA ORGANA FINDS HAN SOLO'S WORDS MAKE SENSE.

BUT OF COURSE, NEITHER SHE NOR HAN KNOW THE EXTENT OF COMMANDER STROM'S ORDERS...

WE'RE AFTER REBELS GUILTY OF PIRACY AND HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO SHOOT TO KILL.

WHERE DID THEY GO AFTER ABANDONING THIS SHIP?!

T-THEY SCATTERED...! BUT ON THE WHEEL, YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO--

WE'VE WHATEVER RIGHT OUR COMMANDER GIVES US!

HEAT PARTICLE DETECTOR INDICATES THEY SPLIT INTO THREE GROUPS--

EACH TOOK A DIFFERENT LIFT!

BAY 31

QUICKLY! WE'LL DO THE SAME. THIS ASSIGNMENT'S GOING TO GET STICKY IF THEY REACH THE CROWDS ON THE UPPER LEVELS.

I'D HATE TO ACCIDENTALY BLAST A VACATIONING IMPERIAL GOVERNOR!

EXCUSE MY INTERRUPTING, SENATOR GREYSHADE, BUT WE SEEM TO HAVE A SERIOUS COMPLICATION--

FUGITIVES HAVE BOARDED THE WHEEL WITHOUT PAYING A REGISTRATION FEE OR ESTABLISHING THEIR CREDIT LEVEL--

A SMALL MATTER, SIR, EXCEPT IMPERIAL TROOPS HAVE FOLLOWED... AND ARE SERIOUSLY BENT ON DESTROYING THEM.

WELL, THAT IS INTERESTING, MASTER-COM. BETTER PUT ME IN CONTACT WITH THE GOOD COMMANDER STROM.

NATURE SEEMS TO HAVE COMPENSATED FOR HIS LACK OF HAIR BY MAKING HIM EXCEPTIONALLY THICK-HEADED.

DONE, SIR. HE'S ON HIS CRUISER AT THE IMPERIAL DOCK.

STROM? WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? ONE OF THE CASINOS FORGET TO LET YOU WIN?

COMMANDER STROM TO YOU, GREYSHADE.

AND SENATOR GREYSHADE TO YOU, COMMANDER. THE EMPEROR MAY HAVE DISSOLVED THAT AUGUST OFFICE, BUT I STILL LIKE THE TITLE... EVEN IF I DID PUT IT TO DUBIOUS USE.

NOW WHY ARE YOUR MEN ON THE WHEEL?

TO KILL REBELS.

AN ANSWER WORTHY OF A MILITARY MAN... AND A FOOL!

STROM, AREN'T YOU AWARE THAT MUCH OF THE EMPIRE'S MILITARY FUNDING COMES FROM THE TAX ON THE WHEEL'S EARNINGS?

THOSE EARNINGS ARE LARGE BECAUSE MOST OF THE GALAXY LIKES TO GAMBLE HERE--

AND THEY LIKE GAMBLING HERE BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT'S TOTALLY FREE FROM IMPERIAL INTERFERENCE!

START INTERFERING AND YOU DRY UP THIS FOUNTAIN OF WEALTH! EVEN THE EMPEROR UNDERSTANDS THAT!

IF HE LEARNS YOU'VE JEOPARDIZED IT... YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO COMMAND A FERTILIZER SCOW.

KILL YOUR REBELS AFTER THEY LEAVE HERE! IT'S ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF YOUR CONTAINMENT ZONE!

PERHAPS YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR SONG, GREYSHADE, WHEN YOU LEARN THESE REBELS PLUNDERED AND DESTROYED A HOUSE OF TAGGE MERCHANT SHIP--

--ONE DELIVERING WHEEL PROFITS TO YOUR INNER-SYSTEMS BANK!

BLAST YOU, STROM! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO AT ONCE?!

ALL RIGHT! IF YOUR MEN CAN GET THE REBELS ON THE LOWER LEVELS...THEY'RE YOURS! BUT I WANT ONE ALIVE FOR QUESTIONING!

THANK YOU, SENATOR.

RELAY THE WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR'S WISHES TO OUR PURSUIT SQUADS--

--BUT SEE THAT THE TRANSMISSION IS GARBLED! PARTICULARLY THAT BUSINESS ABOUT "ONE ALIVE FOR QUESTIONING!"

ALIVE, THE FOOLS FROM THAT FREIGHTER MIGHT CAST DOUBT THAT THE SCUTTLING OF THE MERCHANT SHIP WAS A REBEL ACTION--

--DEAD THEY'LL BE OUT FINAL PROOF.

AND A MOST IMPORTANT STEP--

"--IN THE SUCCESS OF THE EMPIRE'S PLAN!"

ARTOO-DEETOO, THESE ACCESS CORRIDORS SEEM ENDLESS! WE'RE LOST! MY SERVO-MOTORS ARE OVER-STRAINED AND--

NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

BREE OOOP!

TRYING TO TAP A MAIN COMPUTER LINE IN THE WALL CIRCUITRY?

WELL, THAT MIGHT AID IN LOCATING THE HOSPITAL, BUT SURELY WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO SPARE BEFORE--

BLIKE!

THERE THEY ARE!

ARTOO, WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME AT ALL!

VAPORIZE THEM! THE DROIDS RIGHT ALONG WITH THE INJURED REBEL!

SHALL I INTER-CEDE IN ANY WAY, SENATOR GREYSHADE?

FOR TWO DROIDS AND AN APPARENTLY DYING BOY...? NOT WORTH THE EFFORT, MASTER-COM.

ARE YOU GETTING ANYTHING ON THE OTHERS?

HERE'S SOMETHING NOW, SIR. A MAN AND A WOMAN... PINNED DOWN BY STORMTROOPERS ON LEVEL FIVE.

MASTER-COM! GIVE ME TIGHT FO-CUS ON THE WOMAN!

YOU RECOGNIZE HER, SIR...?

I DO INDEED, MASTER-COM! PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA... LOVELIEST OF MY ADVERSAR-IES IN THE SENATE--

--AND A REBEL LEADER NOW! EITHER STROM DOESN'T REALIZE WHAT HE'S CHASING...OR HE'S MORE THICK-HEADED THAN I THOUGHT!

MASTER-COM, IT'S TIME TO ACT!

NEXT ISSUE THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE!

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THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE!

THERE'S **ONE** OF THE REBELS WE'RE AFTER! **VAPORIZE** HIM **AND** HIS DROIDS!

ARTOO DEETOO, **FORGET** ABOUT TAPPING INTO THE MAIN COMPUTER SYSTEM TO LOCATE **HOSPITAL FACILITIES** FOR MASTER LUKE--

--WE'RE ALREADY **DOOMED!**

VABEET DRRP!

THIS IS THE **WHEEL**...A MAN-MADE SPACE STATION. AND **HERE**, IN ONE OF ITS LOWER LEVEL ACCESS CORRIDORS, A RACE FROM ITS DOCKING BAYS TO ESCAPE PURSUING STORM-TROOPERS IS ABOUT TO **END**...

LGZII

... BUT **NOT** IN THE WAY **EXPECTED** BY THE IMPERIAL TROOPS AS THEIR FINGERS **TIGHTEN** ON THEIR BLASTER TRIGGERS!

W-WHAT--? SOME KIND OF **BARRIER** COMING DOWN **BETWEEN** US--!

IT'S A **CONTAINMENT WALL**...TO SEAL OFF **DAMAGED SECTIONS!**

CEASE **FIRING!** CEASE FIRING OR--

OR THE WALL'S **BLAST SHIELDING** WILL CAUSE THE FIERY **ENERGY BOLTS**...

...TO **RICCOCHET** BACK INTO THOSE WHO **SHOT** THEM!

THAT'S **AMAZING,** ARTOO! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE STROKE OF **LUCK** FOR US!

DOOT A-BRIE WEET

YOU **MADE** THAT HAPPEN BY TAMPERING WITH THE **WALL CIRCUITRY?** WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT'S ANY EXCUSE FOR **NAME-CALLING!**

AFTER ALL, YOU **STILL** DIDN'T FULFILL OUR **PRIMARY TASK** OF LOCATING THE--

BREEP BOOP

YOU LEARNED WHERE THE **HOSPITAL** IS, TOO?

HOW CAN ONE THERMO-CAPSUARY DEHOUSING ASSISTER **BE** SO INTOLERABLE?!

THAT QUESTION WILL BE INTENSELY DEBATED THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY TO THE WHEEL'S **HOSPITAL FACILITIES.** AND UNKNOWN TO THE TWO MECHANIZED **DEBATERS**...

...THEIR **PROGRESS** IS BEING CAREFULLY CHARTED FROM THE GREAT SPACE STATION'S **EXECUTIVE TOWER.**

EXCUSE ME, SENATOR GREYSHADE--

-- BUT THOSE **DROIDS** CARRYING THE INJURED YOUNG **REBEL** SEEM TO HAVE **OUTWITTED** COMMANDER STROM'S **TROOPERS.**

ONE OF THEM ACTUALLY HAD THE **AUDACITY** TO TAP INTO **MY** SYSTEM. SUCH INITIATIVE AND DEVOTION SEEMS MOST **UNUSUAL,** SIR. I'D LIKE TO **STUDY**--

MASTER-COM, THE ONLY ONE OF THOSE REBELS **I'M** INTERESTED IN--

--IS **PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA!** HAVE YOU CARRIED OUT MY **ORDERS**...OR ARE YOU TOO **BUSY** MOONING OVER TWO FELLOW **DROIDS?**

SORRY TO **IRRITATE** YOU, SENATOR. BUT MY **PERSONALIZED FORM** DOESN'T PREVENT ME FROM PERFORMING **MULTI-FUNCTIONS**...LIKE **ANY** MASTER COMPUTER SYSTEM.

ALL PROCEEDS AS YOU **REQUESTED**--

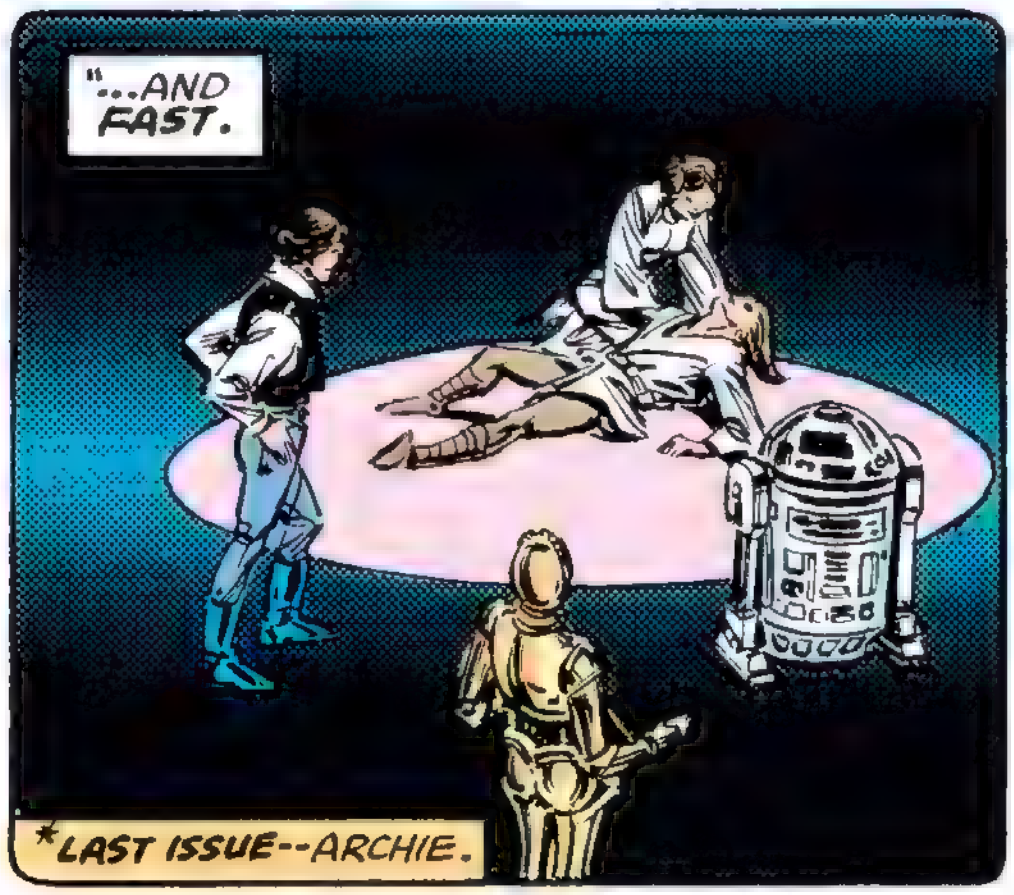
"--THOUGH OF COURSE WE WORK ON A VERY **TIGHT** TIME MARGIN!"

REMIND ME TO **COMPLIMENT** YOU ON YOUR CHOICE OF **SANCTUARIES,** MISTER SOLO--

--IF WE GET **OUT** OF THIS **ALIVE!**

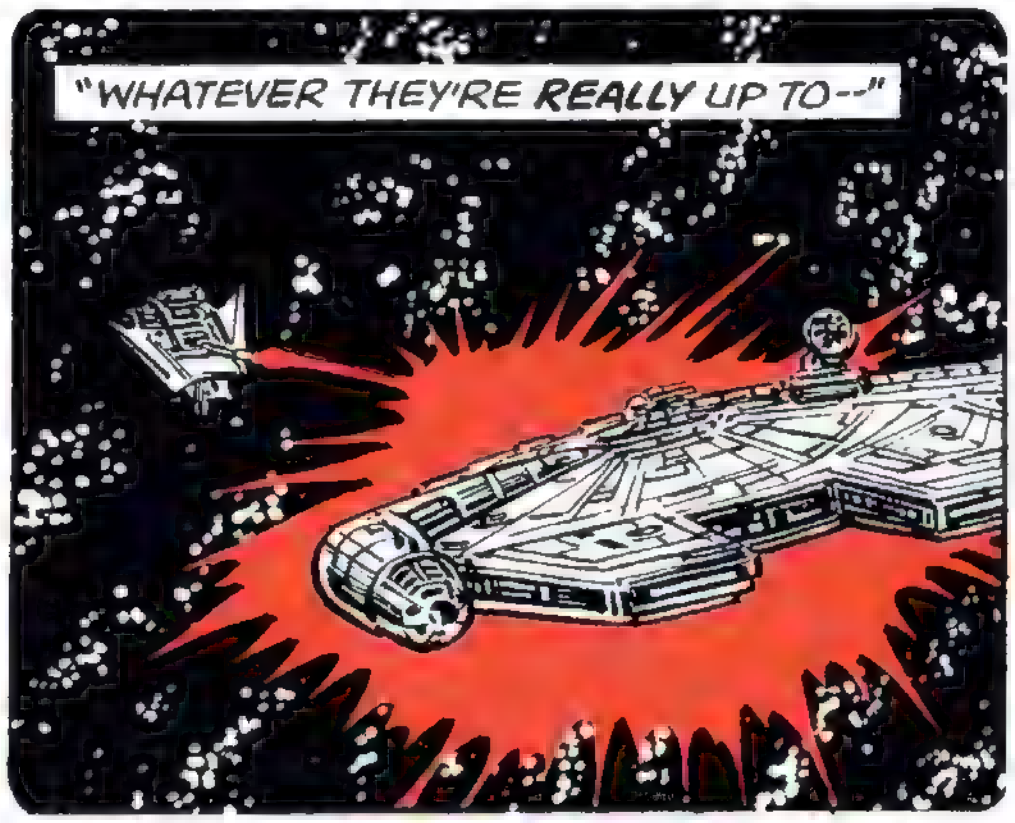
IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME, YOUR ROYALNESS! THE EMPIRE HAS ALWAYS WILLINGLY KEPT ITS HANDS OFF THE WHEEL--
--UNTIL NOW!

"WITH LUKE ZAPPED BY SOME KIND OF MENTAL SHOCK WHILE MEDITATING ON THE FORCE,* WE HAD TO FIND MEDICAL FACILITIES...



"HOW WAS I TO KNOW THAT HEADING FOR HERE WOULD BRING US ACROSS A MERCHANT SHIP SCUTTLED BY THE IMPERIALS...

"OR THAT ONE OF THE EMPIRE'S PURSUIT-CLASS CRUISERS WOULD IMMEDIATLY HOP ON OUR TAILS, INTENT UPON NAILING US AS THE REBEL PIRATES?!



--OUR BEING DEAD PLAYS TOO IMPORTANT A PART TO SUIT ME!
I'M NOT EXACTLY PLEASED EITHER, HAN! PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY'RE CHARGING US--
--AND THERE'S NO WAY TO STOP THEM ALL!

BUT AS THE STORMTROOPERS **MOVE IN...**

WHEEL SECURITY, IMPERIALS!

THANK YOU FOR **DETAINING** THESE INTERLOPERS... **WE'LL** TAKE IT FROM HERE!

W-WHAT--?! BUT OUR COMMANDER HAD ALREADY **ARRANGED** WITH THE **WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR** THAT WE COULD--

IF THERE'S A **MISUNDERSTANDING,** WHY **COMPOUND** IT...? PARTICULARLY FROM A **WEAK DEFENSIVE POSITION?**

LEAVE THIS MATTER TO **SENATOR GREYSHADE.**

HE'S THE WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR?! HAN, I **KNOW** HIM FROM MY **SENATE DAYS!** HE'S UTTERLY CORRUPT, CONTEMPTIBLE AND--

OBVIOUSLY **MY** KIND OF GUY! IF WE'RE CHOOSING BETWEEN **EVILS,** YOUR WORSHIP...I GO WITH THE ONE THAT LETS YOU **LIVE** LONGER!

HOWEVER, ONCE THE SECURITY GUARDS HAVE TAKEN **CHARGE** OF THEIR CAPTIVES...

HEY! WHAT **IS** THIS?! THE LADY AND I ARE A **TEAM** ...WE STICK **TOGETHER!**

SENATOR GREYSHADE THINKS **OTHERWISE.**

YOUR **LIFE** IS NOW BEING MEASURED BY HOW **COOPERATIVE** YOU ARE IN HELPING US **SEARCH** YOUR SHIP--

--AND BY **WHAT** WE **FIND** THERE!

WHILE THAT SEARCH IS BEING **CONDUCTED**, THERE IS **ANOTHER** FUGITIVE FROM THE MILLENNIUM FALCON **UNACCOUNTED** FOR...

HIS NAME IS **CHEWBACCA**.

HE IS A **WOOKIEE**.

AND HE HAS HAD MORE SUCCESS THAN ANY OF HIS FRIENDS AT **ELUDING** THE STORMTROOPERS.

IN FACT, DESPITE HAVING TO HIDE THE BODY OF A SLAIN **REBEL** RECOVERED FROM THE PLUNDERED MERCHANT SHIP...*

*ALSO **LAST ISSUE**--ARCHIE.

...HE ALONE HAS ENJOYED REMARKABLE **LUCK** IN REACHING THE GROUP'S **GOAL**...

LIFT TUBE 3

...THE **UPPER LEVEL** OF THE WHEEL!

CASINO

DINE

UNFORTUNATELY... THAT LUCK IS ABOUT TO **RUN OUT**.

THE SO-CALLED **UPPER LEVEL** OF THE WHEEL IS ACTUALLY A **CITY** LINING ITS INTERIOR RIM. IT IS A CITY MAINTAINED BY ARTIFICIAL ATMOSPHERE AND GRAVITY...

...AND DEVOTED SOLELY TO **PLEASURE.** SPECIFICALLY, THE PLEASURE OF **GAMBLING.**

THE CITY HAS **EVERY** CONCEIVABLE LUXURY AND FACILITY A DISCERNING VISITOR MIGHT REQUIRE, BUT THE OVERWHELMING **MAJORITY** OF ITS BUILDINGS ARE **CASINOS...**

...AND IT IS IN AN AGREED-UPON MEETING PLACE CALLED THE **CRIMSON CASINO** THAT CHEWBACCA'S **LUCK** SOURS.

ONE **MOMENT** PLEASE, SIR--

--OUR **ENTRANCE SCANNER** HAS NO **PRINT-OUT** ON YOU. THIS WOULD INDICATE YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR WHEEL **REGISTRATION FEE** OR ESTABLISHED A **CREDIT LEVEL.**

SINCE YOU HAD TO CHECK YOUR **BLASTER** AT THE DOOR... WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU COME **QUIETLY** TO WHEEL SECURITY.

WURF?

ANYONE MAY MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO A WOOKIEE. THE **DIFFICULTY** OF COURSE...

RAARGG!

WAAK!

...IS GETTING **HIM** TO GO ALONG WITH IT!

ELIMINATING THE MAN WITH THE **BLASTER** IS A GOOD STRATEGIC MOVE... BUT IT **ALSO** LEAVES CHEWIE **OPEN** TO THE **SECOND** OF THE CRIMSON CASINO'S BOUNCERS.

BEING AN **EXPERT** WHO FINDS HIMSELF RARELY **TESTED**, HE GRABS THIS OPPORTUNITY **FAST** AND **HARD!**

A **BRAWL!** WHO'LL **WAGER** ON THE OUTCOME?!

WHAT **ODDS?**

I'LL BACK THE **MANDALLIAN GIANT** ...AT FIVE-TO-FOUR.

WHEN MANDALLIANS ARE TRAINED FROM **CHILDHOOD** IN THE COMBATIVE ARTS?! **UNFAIR!**

YOUR **EX-PERTISE** EQUALS MINE--

VERY WELL! SINCE THE **WOOKIEE** HAS ONLY BRUTE **PERSISTANCE** IN HIS FAVOR, LET US SAY--

--ALL BETS ARE **OFF!**

BRAKAAS

AND THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S FIRST MATE **WINS** HIS BATTLE...

AT THE **COST** OF AROUSING **WHEEL SECURITY!**

DID YOU SEE **THAT?..?** IT TOOK A **MAXIMUM STUN CHARGE** TO BRING HIM **DOWN!**

I'VE **HEARD** OF WOOKIEES, BUT NEVER **SEEN** ONE! WHAT A **SPECIMEN** FOR THE BIG GAME!

AND THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHERE HE'S HEADED!

THE FURHEAD WILL FIND HE'S BOARDED THE WHEEL FOR THE *ULTIMATE GAMBLE--*

--WHEN HE WAKES UP IN THE *GLADIATOR PITS!*

*MEANWHILE, IN ONE OF THE WHEEL'S INTERIOR **DOCKING BAYS...***

YOU GUYS ARE **DESTROYING** A WORK OF ENGINEERING *ART...*UNDOING **YEARS** OF SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS!

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO **FIND?!**

WHEEL **PROFITS** YOU **PIRATED** FROM A HOUSE OF TAGGE **MERCHANT SHIP,** REBEL--

--AND WE'RE AUTHORIZED TO CARRY OUT A **DEATH SENTENCE** IF YOU DON'T START **COOPERATING!**

AND AS THIS SCENE IS VIDEO-MONITORED TO THE WHEEL'S **EXECUTIVE TOWER**...

...IT IS VIEWED BY A RECENT **ARRIVAL** TO THE ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE SUITE.

GREYSHADE--!

AH! AND YOU SEEMED SO FIRMLY RESOLVED NOT TO **SPEAK** TO ME.

YOUR BRAND OF SENATORIAL POLITICS IS **STILL** TOO FRESH ON MY MIND!

BUT I BELIEVE **I** KNOW WHAT HAN SOLO **DOESN'T**... CALL OFF YOUR **MEN!**

IT SOUNDS AS IF YOU ACTUALLY **CARE** FOR THAT VAGABOND STAR-HOPPER--

I CARE ABOUT **MANY** THINGS, SIMON GREYSHADE! THAT'S THE **DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN US.

YOU'RE EASILY **AMUSED**... BUT **NEVER** COMMITTED!

NOW DO YOU WANT TO **HEAR** ABOUT HI-JACKED WHEEL PROFITS OR **NOT?**

I **YIELD** THE FLOOR TO THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS/SENATOR FROM **ALDERAAN.**

ALDERAAN IS **DESTROYED**... BY THE HAND OF THE EMPIRE!

THE SAME **HAND** THAT'S GRABBED YOUR SHIPMENT OF **PROFITS!**

UNTIL I KNEW WHAT **CARGO** THAT MERCHANT SHIP CARRIED, I COULDN'T **GUESS** WHAT THE IMPERIALS WERE **UP** TO--

THE EMPIRE'S NEVER DARED **INTERFERE** WITH THE WHEEL...FOR FEAR OF RUINING ITS **POPULARITY** AND VALUE AS A SOURCE OF **TAXES.**

BUT IF IT APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME A **TARGET** OF THE **REBEL ALLIANCE**--

--THEY CAN JUSTIFY A COMPLETE **TAKEOVER** IN THE GUISE OF OFFERING **PROTECTION** AND EVERYONE WILL **ACCEPT** IT!

THERE ARE **FLAWS,** BUT WHAT YOU SUGGEST **DOES** SEEM TYPICAL OF IMPERIAL **THINKING**--

THE BEST **PROOF,** OF COURSE, WOULD BE **FINDING** THAT PIRATED **CARGO** AND--

I HAVE A **THEORY** ABOUT THAT! IF YOU'LL JUST SET ME AND MY FRIENDS **FREE,** I'LL--

SENATOR GREYSHADE! COMMANDER STROM IS ON HIS **WAY** HERE AT THE **HEAD** OF A SQUAD OF **STORMTROOPERS.**

HE'S **FURIOUS** OVER YOUR INTERFERENCE IN HIS HUNT FOR THE **REBELS** AND I FEAR--

VEEDOW!

WE'VE MOVED TOO **SWIFTLY** FOR YOUR SECURITY SQUADS **OR** THIS WALKING MASTER COMPUTER!

STROM... I THINK YOU'VE GONE MAD.

MERELY **RECKLESS,** GREYSHADE.

THOUGH NOT AS MUCH AS **YOU**...OR DO YOU **DENY** THAT'S A **REBEL LEADER** AT YOUR SIDE?

FOR HARBORING A FUGITIVE LIKE ***LEIA ORGANA***... I'M WITHIN MY RIGHTS TO ***EXECUTE*** YOU WHERE YOU ***STAND***, GREYSHADE.

AND WITH MY ***SQUAD*** POSTED AT YOUR SUITE'S ***ENTRANCE***... NO ONE WILL ARRIVE TO ***STOP*** ME.

NO ONE ***HAS*** TO, STROM! ***MASTER-COM***...***DISARM HIM!***

ZDAK

MY HANDS!

BE GLAD THEY WEREN'T ***BLOWN OFF!*** EVEN IF THE MASTER COMPUTER ***DOES*** AUTOMATICALLY REVERT BACK TO ITS ***ORIGINAL SYSTEM*** WHEN ATTACKED--

--THOSE ROBOT BODIES ARE ***EXPENSIVE***. BESIDES ...I HATE TALKING TO ***WALLS***.

YOU CAN ***START*** BY ESCORTING COMMANDER STROM INTO THE ANTECHAMBER. I WANT TO ***TALK*** TO HIM...***ALONE***.

MEANWHILE, MY SUITE ***IS YOURS*** TO FEEL AT ***HOME*** IN, PRINCESS. ***ENJOY*** YOURSELF--

--AND DON'T WASTE TIME LOOKING FOR ***ANOTHER*** WAY OUT. THERE ***ISN'T*** ANY!

ACTUALLY THE ***OLD*** MODEL WAS GETTING A BIT ***WORN***, SIR. I BELIEVE THIS ***NEW*** ONE WILL FUNCTION EVEN ***BETTER***.

MOMENTS LATER...

MASTER-COM, YOU WILL NOT ***RECORD*** OR ***HEAR*** THIS CONVERSATION.

WHAT'S THIS ALL ***ABOUT***, GREYSHADE?!

ABOUT OUR BECOMING ***PARTNERS***, STROM.

PARTNERS?! NOW WHO SEEMS TO HAVE GONE MAD?

STROM, I KNOW WHAT THE EMPIRE IS DOING... THAT THE SUPPOSED REBEL THEFT OF WHEEL PROFITS IS THE FIRST STEP IN A PLANNED TAKEOVER.

DONE WELL... IT'S A SCHEME THAT COULD SUCCEED. YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT WELL, STROM.

BUT NO ONE, PARTICULARLY YOUR SUPERIORS, NEED LEARN THAT... IF I KEEP SILENT.

IN RETURN FOR WHAT, GREY-SHADE?

THE ONLY THING ALL MY CHARM AND TOTAL LACK OF SCRUPLES EVER FAILED TO BRING ME--

--PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA.

INCREDIBLE! YOU'RE ACTUALLY A ROMANTIC!

BUT WHAT ABOUT HER TRAVELLING COMPANIONS?

THEY CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT RUNNING INTO YOUR MILITARY CONTAINMENT ZONE. I'LL SEE TO IT THAT THEY CAN'T STAY EITHER ...AND LIVE.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THIS TO A CIVILIAN, BUT I LIKE YOUR THINKING--

TINK!

SOMETIME LATER, AT THE WHEEL'S HOSPITAL...

THIS SHOCK CASE IS STILL HERE? I THOUGHT RECORDS INDICATED HE WASN'T REGISTERED.

MASTER COMPUTER SYSTEM AUTHORIZED HOLDING AND TREATMENT, DOCTOR... UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS.

UNUSUAL. WHAT ABOUT THOSE TWO DROIDS WHO BROUGHT HIM?

"RIGHT **OUTSIDE**, I BELIEVE, DOCTOR...NEAR THE **COMPUTER RELAY BANK.**"

ARTOO DEETOO, **HURRY** WITH THOSE **REPAIRS!**

IF ANYONE EVEN **SUSPECTS** WE TAMPERED WITH **COMMUNICATIONS** TO AUTHORIZE MASTER LUKE'S **HOSPITALIZATION**, I'M AFRAID--

TA-DOIT!

FUSS-BUDGET?! WHY YOU MISPROGRAMMED SLUDGE-CONTAINER, I--

YOU'RE THE ONES I WANT! COME ALONG **QUICKLY** ...OR I'LL **USE** THIS **DISRUPTER!**

NO NEED FOR **THAT,** OFFICER. WE'RE THE VERY **SPIRIT** OF COOPERATION! ONLY CONCERN FOR OUR SICK **MASTER** MADE US--

THAT'S NOTHING TO **ME,** DROID. YOU'RE **WHEEL PROPERTY** NOW...IT'S MY JOB TO GET YOU INTO **STORAGE.**

WHEEL PROPERTY...? SURELY THERE'S BEEN AN **ERROR,** SIR--

THEN SOMEONE NAMED **HAN SOLO** MADE IT...YOU'VE JUST BEEN **PAWNED** TO GIVE HIM A **GAMBLING STAKE!**

NOW SHUT UP AND **MOVE!**

RESIGNEDLY, THREEPIO AND ARTOO **OBEY** THE SECURITY OFFICER. **ELSEWHERE**...OBEDIENCE IS IN SHORTER SUPPLY.

THESE ARE THE **GLADIATOR PITS,** LOCATED IN THE **BOTTOM-MOST** SECTION OF THE WHEEL...

HURRY WITH THOSE **CONTROL PRODS!** THAT WOOKIE'S **AWAKE** ...AND NOT **HAPPY** WITH HIS PIT-MATES!

THAT'S IT! KEEP HIM AT BAY! BETTER LISTEN UP, BIG FELLA...YOU GOT AN IMPORTANT DECISION TO MAKE!

YOU'RE ON THE WHEEL ILLEGALLY AND YOU'VE RUN UP A LOT OF FINES AND DAMAGES. WELL, THIS IS PAY OFF TIME!

ROWRK!

YOU CAN VOLUNTEER FOR GLADIATOR SERVICE IN THE BIG GAME, WITH A CHANCE AT A FORTUNE IF YOU'RE A WINNER--

SNARF!

--OR, YOU CAN BE DUMPED ON A WAITING EMPIRE PRISON SHIP! DESTINATION: THE SPINE MINES OF KESSEL!

NOT MUCH OF A CHOICE, IS IT, FUZZY?

YOU LOSE **AGAIN**, STAR-HOPPER!

BLAST IT! I THOUGHT MY LUCK HAD **CHANGED** WHEN WHEEL SECURITY LET ME OFF THE **HOOK** ON THOSE **PIRACY** CHARGES--

THEN THEY HIT ME WITH WHAT I **OWE** IF I WANT TO **STAY** ON BOARD--

--AND IT'S BEEN **DOWNHILL** EVER SINCE!

WITH CHEWIE **MISSING**, LUKE **HOSPITALIZED**, AND LEIA HELD BY THE WHEEL **ADMINISTRATOR** ...I CAN'T **AFFORD** TO GET **KICKED OFF!**

ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN THE **EMPIRE'S** WAITING WITH **OPEN ARMS!**

SINCE THE **FALCON** WAS CONFISCATED AGAINST **DOCKING FEES**, ALL I COULD DO WAS PUT THE **DROIDS** IN HOCK--

--AND **PRAY** I COULD RUN UP A BIG ENOUGH STAKE TO BAIL US **ALL** OUT!

I'LL NEED MORE CHIPS THAN **THIS**, CASHIER--

SORRY, SIR. THAT'S ALL THAT **REMAINS** OF YOUR CREDIT LINE.

TREAT YOURSELF TO A **LUBRICATION SOAK**, TIN-BRITCHES--

--THAT WAY I KNOW I'M NOT THE **ONLY ONE** WHO TOOK A **BATH!**

SIR, ONE **MOMENT**, PLEASE--

THOUGH YOUR **CREDIT** IS EXHAUSTED, IT IS **STILL** POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO **GAMBLE.**

AND WHAT DO I USE FOR **STAKES,** CASHIER--?

WHY... YOUR **LIFE,** SIR.

SEE FOR **YOURSELF.**

The ULTIMATE GAMBLE

HIGH RISK! HIGH REWARD! BE A GLADIATOR! IN THE BIG GAME!

HAN SOLO **STARES,** LONG AND HARD.

...THEN WALKS FROM THE CASINO'S ATMOSPHERE OF PLUSH **EXCITEMENT**...

...INTO ONE OF COLD **DESPERATION.**

JUST LET THE SCANNER GET AN **IDENTI-PRINT** FOR THE **RECORD** AND--

CONGRATULATIONS, CORELLIAN...YOU'RE A **GLADIATOR!**

INFORMATION THAT IS SWIFTLY **RELAYED** TO THE WHEEL'S EXECUTIVE TOWER...

WHAT **NOW,** SENATOR GREYSHADE...?

NOW WE ARRANGE FOR OUR SMUGGLER CAPTAIN TO LOSE THE **BIG GAME--**

--JUST AS **CERTAINLY** AS WE MADE HIM LOSE THE **OTHERS!**

NEXT ISSUE: **DEATHGAME!**

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CAPTAIN SOLO IS **DOOMED**, ARTOO--

--AND THERE'S *NO WAY* WE CAN *HELP* HIM!

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THE X-WING FIGHTER SEEMS TO APPEAR FROM **NOWHERE**; SUDDENLY, VIOLENTLY, HAMMERING **ENERGY BOLTS** INTO A RULAARIAN PLEASURE YACHT JUST DEPARTED FROM THAT MONUMENT TO THE GALAXY'S LUST FOR **GAMBLING**...

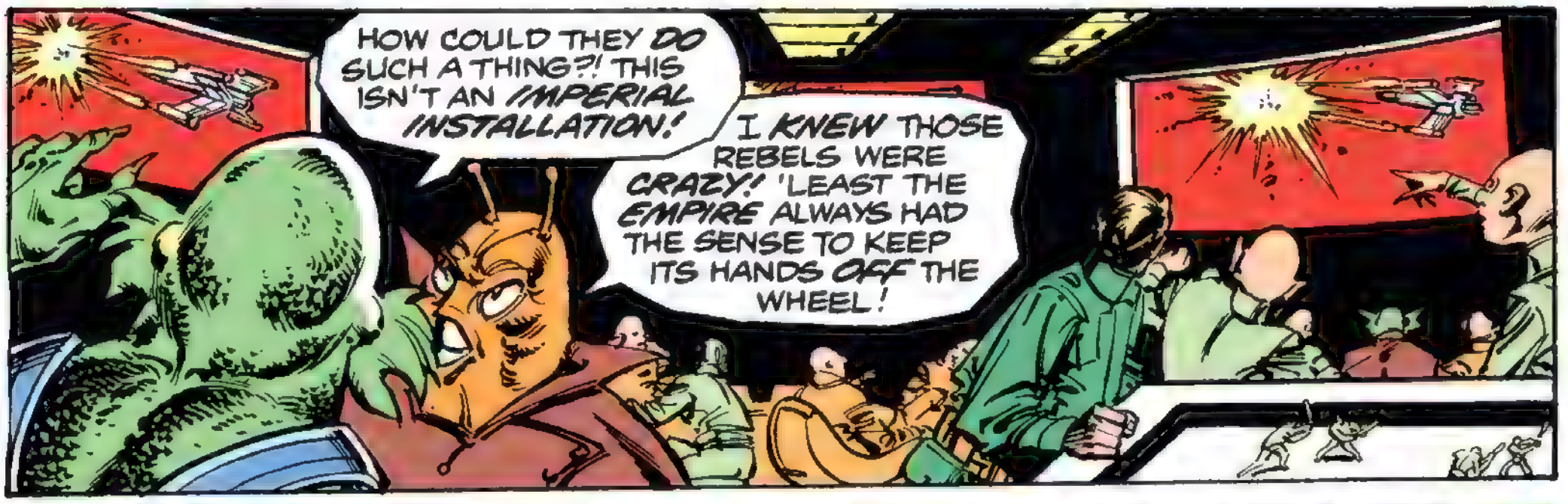
...THE **WHEEL**, ARTIFICIAL SATELLITE THAT IS HOME TO THE **CITY** OF CASINOS.

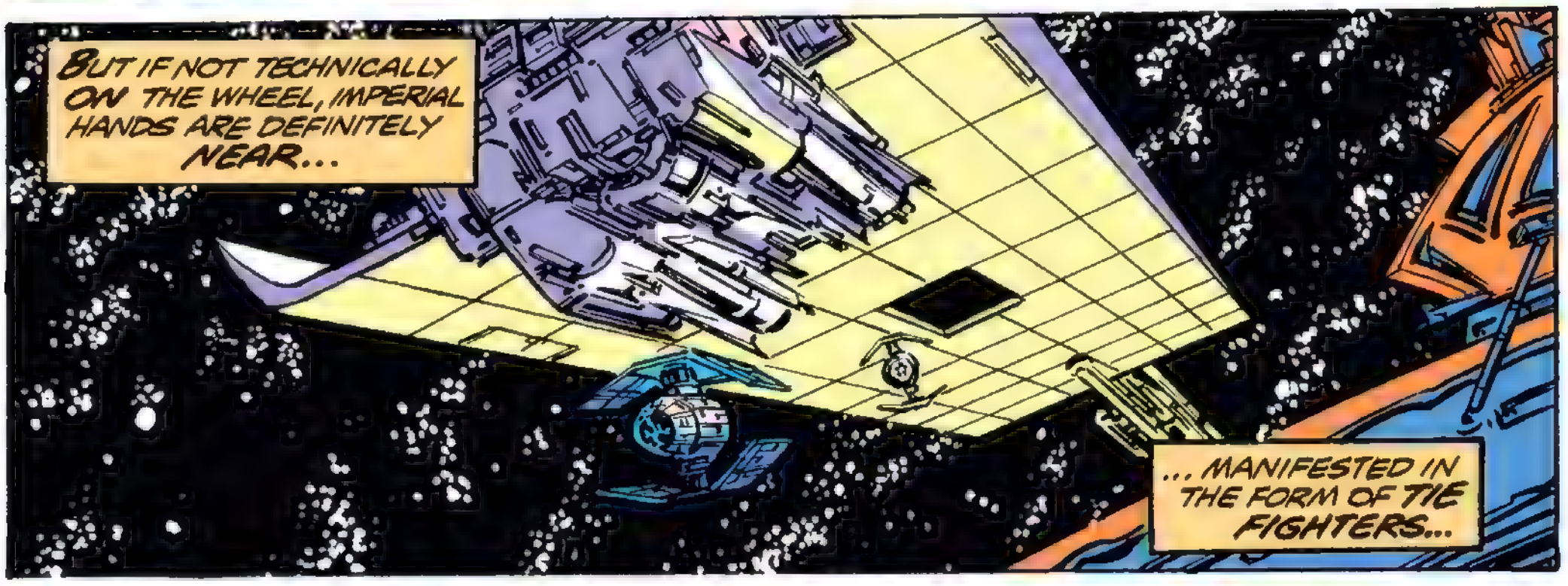
THERE IS NOTHING **CHANCE** OR **RANDOM** IN THIS REBEL CRAFT'S APPEARANCE. IT IS A CAREFULLY CALCULATED **MOVE** IN A VAST AND DEADLY **SCHEME**.

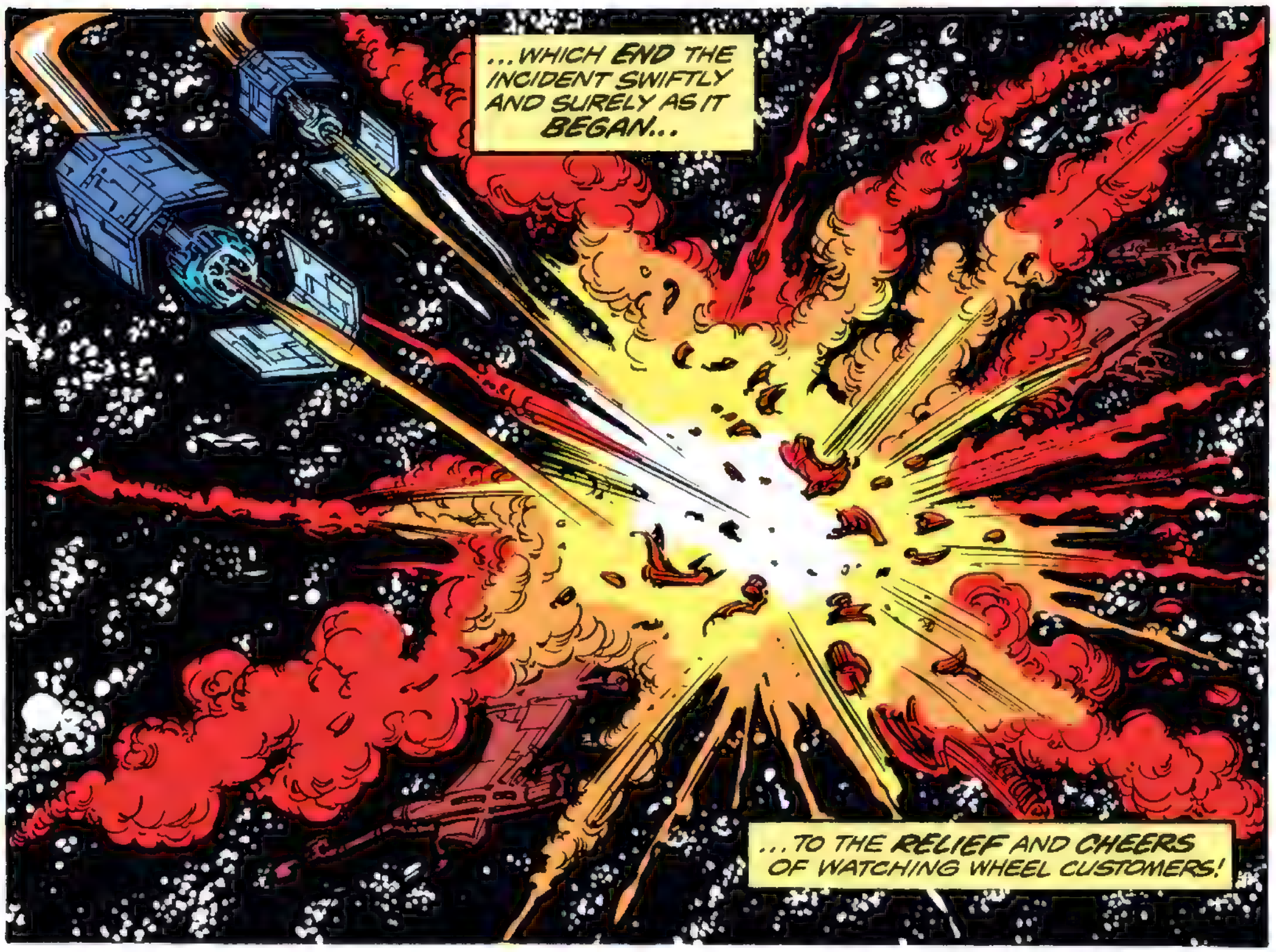
DEATHGAME

LG257

WITHIN THE GLITTERING **GAMBLING PALACES** OF THE WHEEL'S INNER-RIM CITY, PATRONS STARE **AWESTRUCK** AS THE ATTACK IS FLASHED ONTO CASINO VIEWSCREENS...


HOW COULD THEY DO SUCH A THING?! THIS ISN'T AN IMPERIAL INSTALLATION!
I KNEW THOSE REBELS WERE CRAZY! 'LEAST THE EMPIRE ALWAYS HAD THE SENSE TO KEEP ITS HANDS OFF THE WHEEL!





BUT THERE ARE **OTHERS** ON THE WHEEL WHOSE REACTION IS DECIDEDLY THE **OPPOSITE**...

SUCH AS PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA... OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE.

GREYSHADE, YOU'RE EVEN *MORE* DESPICABLE THAN I *THOUGHT* YOU WERE DURING OUR DAYS IN THE *IMPERIAL SENATE!*

I HAD MY *FAULTS*--

--BUT I NEVER WASTED A FINE *MEAL* AS *YOU'RE* DOING.

YOU NEVER WASTED *ANY* OPPORTUNITY TO ENRICH *YOURSELF* AT THE EXPENSE OF *OTHERS!*

AS *WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR*, I THOUGHT YOU'D *FIGHT* THE EMPIRE'S SCHEME TO *FAKE* REBEL ATTACKS SO THEY'D BE JUSTIFIED IN *TAKING OVER* THIS PLACE AND ALL THE *WEALTH* IT BRINGS IN...

--BUT THAT UGLY *CHARADE* WE'VE JUST WITNESSED *PROVES* YOU'RE GOING *ALONG* WITH THEM!

YOU'RE A *CRUSADER*, MY DEAR PRINCESS... I'M *NOT*. YOU HAVE *YOUR* GAMES TO PLAY... I HAVE *MINE*.

BUT IT'S NICE TO SEE THAT BENEATH THAT SOMETIMES *GLACIAL* EXTERIOR... YOU'RE CAPABLE OF A TRULY *EMOTIONAL OUTBURST!*

MASTER-COM, SEE TO THIS *MESS* IMMEDIATELY.

AND INSTRUCT ALL SERVO-DROIDS TO BE *CAREFUL* WHAT'S LEFT LAYING AROUND. THE FORMER SENATOR FROM ALDERAAN IS TO BE TREATED AS A *GUEST*--

--BUT SHE'S STILL VERY MUCH OUR *PRISONER*.

VRRRT!

EXITING HIS SUITE IN THE WHEEL'S **EXECUTIVE TOWER**, SIMON GREY-SHADE STEPS INTO A **VACUUM-LIFT**...

...AND SWIFTLY **DESCENDS**...

...TO THE WHEEL'S MAIN **TRANSPORT TUBE** AND A WAITING AIRFLOW CAR.

WHICH **STOP** WILL IT BE, ADMINISTRATOR?

I KNOW THE EMPEROR **DISSOLVED** THE SENATE, PILOT... BUT I STILL **PREFER** MY OLD TITLE.

TAKE ME TO THE **END** OF THE **LINE**... THE **IMPERIAL DOCK**.

ON OUR **WAY**... SENATOR.

WITH A HISS OF **FORCED AIR**, THE BULLET-SHAPED CRAFT HURLS ALONG THE **TUBE**, ONE OF **MANY** RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE WHEEL'S **MAIN SPOKE**...

...UNTIL IT REACHES THE OUTER-MOST **DOCK**... AND THE LIGHT-CRUISER OF THE EMPIRE'S **SECTOR COMMANDER**.

AH, **GREYSHADE**! THIS TIME, **I'LL** POUR THE DRINKS... OUR NEWLY-FORMED PARTNERSHIP IS OFF TO A **FINE** START!

I'LL ASSUME FROM *THOSE* REMARKS, STROM, THAT THIS CABIN IS *SAFE* FROM *ANY* MANNER OF SURVEILLANCE--

--PRIVATE... *OR* IMPERIAL.

ABSOLUTELY. MY *LIFE* IS FORFEIT IF MY SUPERIORS LEARN *YOU'VE* DISCOVERED THE EMPIRE'S *PLANS* HERE--

--AS IS *YOURS* IF ANYONE FINDS THAT YOU'RE HARBORING A *REBEL LEADER!**

EACH GENTLEMAN UNCOVERED THE OTHER'S SECRET **LAST ISSUE.-- ARCHIE.

OUR MUTUAL *SURVIVAL* DEPENDS ON EACH OTHER'S *SILENCE*, GREYSHADE... IT'S THE *PERFECT* BASIS FOR *TRUST*.

WELL, I *DON'T* TRUST THE WAY YOU'RE *CARRYING OUT* THIS IMPERIAL SCHEME, STROM! YOU'RE *RUSHING* THINGS...THAT ATTACK WAS *CLUMSY* AND *OBVIOUS!*

THE PAYING CUSTOMERS MAY HAVE BEEN *IMPRESSED*... BUT THE *CASINO OWNERS* AREN'T NEARLY SO *NAIVE!* AND *THEY'RE* THE ONES I HAVE TO--

ONLY THE *CUSTOMERS* COUNT! THE CASINO OWNERS CAN BE *REPLACED* WHEN WE TAKE OVER--

--NATURALLY I WILL RECOMMEND THAT *YOU* BE *RETAINED* AS WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR.

AND AS LONG AS WE CAN MAKE THE PUBLIC *EMBRACE* THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE HERE WITHOUT HARMING *PROFITS*, THERE IS NO *PROBLEM*, SENATOR.

UNLESS *YOU* ARE HAVING ONE WITH THE LOVELY *PRINCESS*...?

LEAVE HER *OUT* OF THIS, STROM, OR--

AH! I STRUCK A *NERVE!* FORGIVE ME, PARTNER... IT MUST BE *DIFFICULT* FOR A MAN OF *NO PRINCIPLES* ATTEMPTING TO WIN THE *AFFECTION* OF A WOMAN WITH SUCH *HIGH ONES*.

ON THE CONTRARY, STROM... THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT MAKES IT EASY.

BUT I INTEND TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY... AND I STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU DO THE SAME WITH THE EMPIRE'S BUSINESS.

THAT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE A THREAT--

IT'S GOOD ADVICE, COMMANDER!

I WON'T RUN A MILITARY OPERATION TO SUIT THE PACE OF YOUR SCHOOL BOY ROMANCE, GREYSHADE!

AND ANY POLITICIAN'S TRICKS TO MAKE ME DO SO WILL BACKFIRE--

--FATALLY!

I BELIEVE IN ACTION, SENATOR... AND I'M NOT DEPARTING THE WHEEL UNTIL I SEE SOME FROM YOU!

YOU PROMISED ME THAT PRINCESS LEIA'S COMPANIONS WOULD BE ELIMINATED--

WHERE ARE THE BODIES?!

THERE AREN'T ANY YET, STROM. EVERYONE WHO CAME TO THE WHEEL IN THE MILLENNIUM FALCON WITH LEIA ORGANA * IS STILL ALIVE--

--BUT, THOUGH THEY MAY NOT REALIZE IT, THEY'RE ALL AWAITING EXECUTION.

*ISSUE #18. --ARCHIE.

"AFTER ALL, THEY DID COMMIT THE CRIME OF STUMBLING UPON YOUR HANDIWORK, COMMANDER ... THE LOOTING OF A HOUSE OF TAGGE MERCHANT SHIP WHICH WAS TRANSPORTING WHEEL PROFITS.*

"AND EVEN THOUGH THEY UNCOVERED YOUR CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO MAKE IT APPEAR TO BE AN ACT OF REBEL PIRACY...

ALSO ISSUE #18.--AMPLIFYIN' ARCH.

--THEY'D HAVE TO TURN UP THE ACTUAL *LOOT* TO REALLY MAKE THE STORY *STICK.*

AND BEFORE YOU BEGIN ROARING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF *THAT* HAPPENING, STROM--

--LET ME HAVE *MASTER-COM* PATCH SOME SIGHTINGS FROM *HIS* SCANNER SYSTEM INTO YOUR *COMMUNICATOR.*

"*ONE* OF PRINCESS LEIA'S FRIENDS IS *HERE*... IN THE WHEEL *HOSPITAL*, APPARENTLY IN SOME STRANGE STATE OF *SHOCK.*

"I DON'T KNOW *HOW* HE GOT IN THIS CONDITION, BUT I'VE MADE ARRANGEMENTS THAT HIS *TREATMENT*...

...WILL ASSURE HE *DOESN'T* RECOVER!

"WHICH LEAVES TWO *OTHERS* FROM THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, WHO, FROM THE WAY THEY RESISTED AND EVADED YOUR *STORMTROOPERS*, ARE OBVIOUSLY QUITE *DANGEROUS.*

"*CHEWBACCA*, THE GIANT WOOKIEE...

"...AND *HAN SOLO*, CORELLIAN SMUGGLING CAPTAIN.

"UNFORTUNATELY FOR *THEM*, AS YOU CAN SEE, THEY'RE BOTH ENLISTED AS *GLADIATORS* IN THE *BIG GAME*. THE WOOKIEE BY *MISCHANCE*; THE CORELLIAN THROUGH *MY* MANIPULATIONS. IN ANY EVENT, DON'T BET ON *EITHER* OF THEM, COMMANDER...

--UNLESS YOU'RE USING THOSE STOLEN **WHEEL PROFITS** AND CAN AFFORD TO **LOSE.**

GAMBLE WITH WHAT IS NOW CONSIDERED **EMPIRE PROPERTY...?!** THE PROFITS REMAIN ON **THIS SHIP,** GREYSHADE ...**UNTOUCHED.**

BUT THOSE REBELS ALSO HAD **DROIDS...** WHAT ABOUT **THEM?**

*"YES, THIS R2-D2 **UNIT** AND HIS TRANSLATOR-COMPANION, A C-3PO **MODEL...** THEY'RE IN WHEEL **STORAGE** AFTER BEING **PAWNED** BY HAN SOLO TO PROVIDE HIM A **GAMBLING STAKE.***

*"THAT GAMBLING STAKE IS NOW PART OF SOME **NEW** WHEEL PROFITS, AND **THIS** PAIR IS SLATED TO HAVE THEIR **MEMORIES** FLUSHED AND THEN BE MELTED DOWN INTO **SLAG!***

SO YOU **SEE,** STROM, THAT BUNCH MAY HAVE COME TO THE WHEEL FOR **SANCTUARY--**

--BUT ALL THEY'VE FOUND IS **DEATH.**

AND I WOULDN'T HAVE IT **ANY** OTHER **WAY,** GREYSHADE!

*BUT IN THE WHEEL **GLADIATOR PITS,** SOMEONE HOLDS A MUCH **DIFFERENT** OPINION...*

...**VEHEMENTLY!**

YOU GUYS ARE **JOBBIN'** ME! I **COULDN'T** HAVE TESTED OUT THIS HIGH! I'LL BE FIGHTIN' **WAY** OUTTA MY CLASS!

IT SURPRISED US **TOO,** SOLO... BUT **THAT'S** WHAT THE SKILL AND REACTION PRINT-OUT **SAYS!**

WHY **COMPLAIN?** THIS PUTS YOU IN A MUCH HIGHER PAYING **PRELIMINARY--**

--YOU'RE PROBABLY **BETTER** THAN YOU **THINK** YOU ARE. NOW, I NEED SOME **DATA** FOR THE CASINO **RATING TAPES.**

WHAT'S YOUR **SPECIALTY?**

SURVIVAL! BUT OBVIOUSLY YOU PEOPLE DON'T INTEND TO LET ME **PRACTICE** IT!

I MEANT **WEAPONS,** SOLO. COOPERATE. GIVE THE BETTORS SOMETHING TO **GO** ON.

WELL, SINCE YOU DON'T ALLOW **BLASTERS**... HOW ABOUT MY OWN **CRUISER** AND A FULL COMPLEMENT OF **PROTON TORPEDOES?**

VERY **FUNNY.** LET'S SEE IF YOU'RE STILL **LAUGHING** WHEN YOU REACH THE **ARENA.**

*AND THAT MOMENT IS NOT **LONG** COMING. HAN IS SWIFTLY OUT-FITTED AND RUSHED TO A **LIFT**...*

*...TO BE CARRIED UPWARD INTO THE GREAT ENCLOSED SPHERE THAT IS THE WHEEL'S **HUB**...*

*... AND WHICH HOUSES ITS **ARENA.** HERE, THE **BIG GAME** IS PLAYED...*

*... AND HERE, HAN SOLO COMES FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE **FIRST** OF HIS FELLOW PLAYERS!*

DAGGER THORNS!

THOSE THINGS SECRETE A VENOMOUS SAP... JUST A SCRATCH IS ENOUGH FOR A KILL!

AND WITH MORE ARMS THAN I CAN BLOCK... SCRATCHES WILL COME EASY FOR THIS LIVING WINDMILL!

UNLESS MY POWER MACE AND SHIELD--

-- HAVE ENOUGH JUICE TO MAKE HIM DROP HIS WEAPONS!

SHRIIIP!

THEY DON'T!

OH BOY, DO THEY DON'T!

BUT WITH A SWIFT **DIVE**... HAN GOES **BETWEEN** HIS FOE'S LEGS!

THE THING THAT **REALLY** HURTS--

--IS THAT IT WAS **MY** IDEA TO COME TO THE **WHEEL** IN THE **FIRST PLACE!**

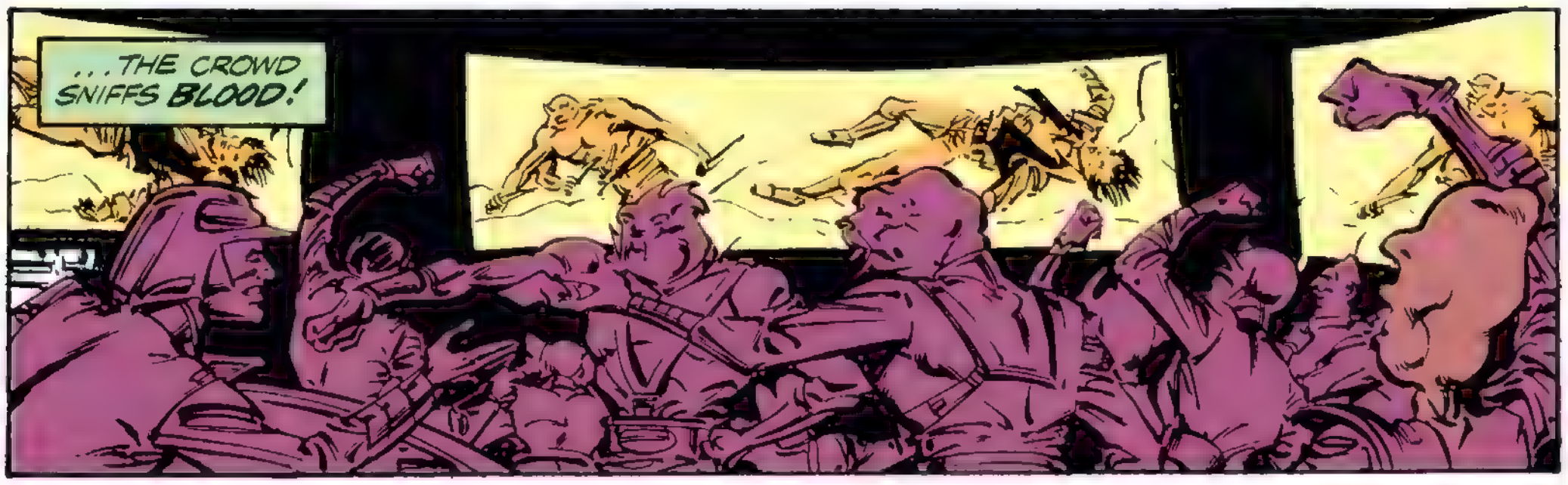
WAM!

SO INSTEAD OF A **SAFE PORT,** I FIND MY SHIP **CONFISCATED,** MY FRIENDS **CAPTURED,** AND THE **EMPIRE** JUST WAITING TO POUNCE--

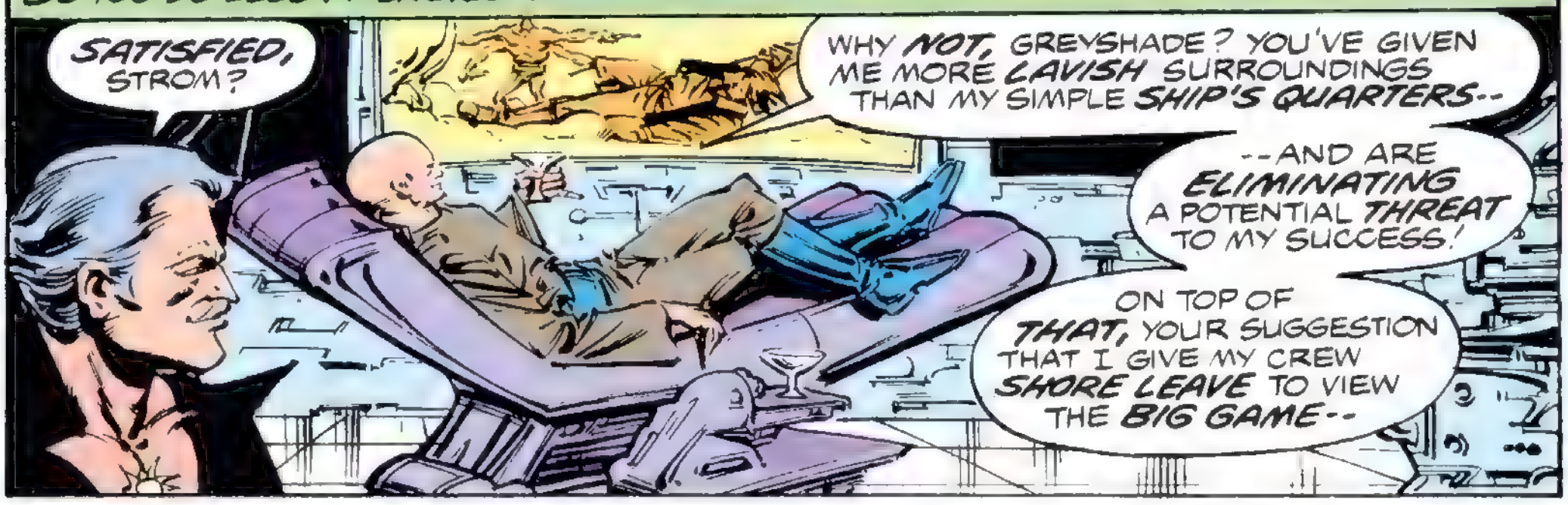
--SOME DAYS YOU **CAN'T** WIN!

KA-WHUD!

AS HAN SOLO CRASHES INTO THE ARENA'S **SIMULA-SCENERY,** IT IS WITNESSED BY EXCITED PATRONS IN **EVERY** CASINO ON THE WHEEL. ALL OTHER PLAY HAS **CEASED.** NOW THE ONLY INTEREST, THE ONLY GAMBLING IS ON THE **BIG GAME.** AND IN **HAN'S** CONTEST...

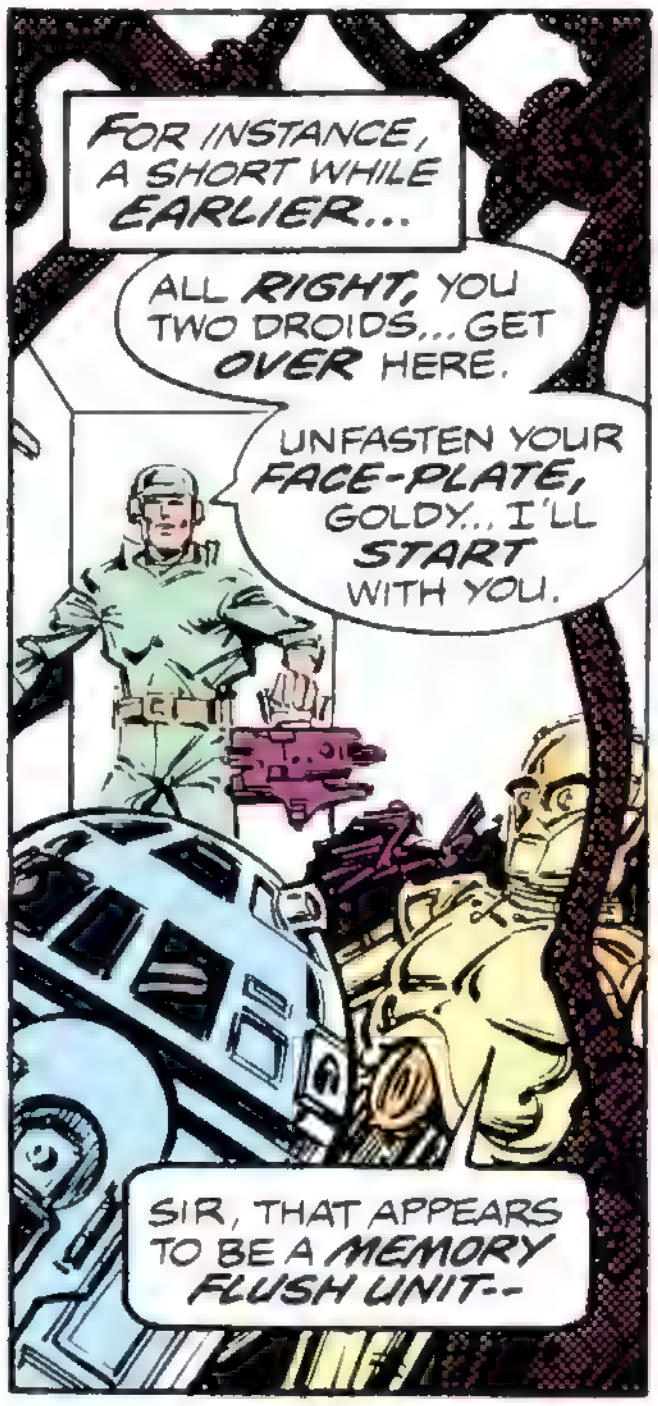


SO TOO DO LESS **FRENZIED** WATCHERS IN THE GRAND CASINO'S **ROYAL LOUNGE...**


SATISFIED, STROM?
WHY **NOT,** GREYSHADE? YOU'VE GIVEN ME MORE **LAVISH** SURROUNDINGS THAN MY SIMPLE **SHIP'S QUARTERS--**
--AND ARE **ELIMINATING** A POTENTIAL **THREAT** TO MY SUCCESS!
ON TOP OF **THAT,** YOUR SUGGESTION THAT I GIVE MY CREW **SHORE LEAVE** TO VIEW THE **BIG GAME--**

--WILL PROBABLY MAKE ME BETTER LOVED AS A **COMMANDER.**
AND THEIR **GAMBLING LOSSES** WILL MAKE **ME** BETTER LOVED AS WHEEL **ADMINISTRATOR!**
I CAN'T THINK OF **EVERYTHING,** STROM... BUT I **TRY.**

YET **SOME** EVENTS ON THE WHEEL **DON'T** PROCEED AS SIMON GREYSHADE PLANS...


FOR INSTANCE, A SHORT WHILE **EARLIER...**
ALL **RIGHT,** YOU TWO DROIDS... GET **OVER** HERE.
UNFASTEN YOUR **FACE-PLATE,** GOLDY... I'LL **START** WITH YOU.
SIR, THAT APPEARS TO BE A **MEMORY FLUSH UNIT--**

--THERE MUST BE SOME **MISTAKE!** WE'RE ONLY HERE **TEMPORARILY** UNTIL MASTER SOLO CAN **WIN** ENOUGH TO **REDEEM** US AND--
HE MUST'VE HAD **BAD LUCK!** NOW **OPEN UP...** I'VE GOT MY **ORDERS.**
THOSE ORDERS ARE **SUPERCEDED,** TECHNO--

--THE DROIDS ARE THE SUBJECTS OF A *STUDY* I'M CONDUCTING. THEY MUST COME WITH *ME*.

I DON'T LIKE *MACHINES* PULLING *RANK*--

BUT SINCE YOU'RE THE WHEEL'S *MASTER-COMPUTER*-- OR AT LEAST SENATOR GREYSHADE'S WALKING AROUND, *PERSONALIZED VERSION* OF IT-- I GUESS I DON'T HAVE MUCH *CHOICE!*

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANY *STUDIES*, BUT ARTOO AND I CERTAINLY *THANK* YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR CAPACITATOR SYSTEMS!

THE STUDY IS MY *OWN*, 3PO UNIT--

--AND I AM CONDUCTING IT ON VERY *DUBIOUS* AUTHORITY.

YOUR *INITIATIVE* ON BEHALF OF YOUR YOUNG MASTER FROM THE TIME YOU ARRIVED ON THE WHEEL HAS BEEN *FASCINATING*. I REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM THE SENATOR TO *OBSERVE* YOU--*

--AND WHILE HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY *GRANT* IT, HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY *DENY* IT EITHER!

PUREST *LOGIC*--

*LAST *ISSUE*.--ARCH.

--AND NOT IN THE *LEAST* DUBIOUS IN MY HUMBLE OPINION. *AGREED*, ARTOO?

(JUST A SIMPLE "*BLEEP*" WILL SUFFICE, TWERP!)

BLOOT

THERE, YOU SEE? NOW IF YOU COULD JUST GET US *BACK* TO MASTER LUKE--

BUT AT THE WHEEL HOSPITAL WHERE LUKE WAS *LEFT*...

HE'S *GONE*, DOCTOR! THE COUCH *RESTRAINTS* HAVE BEEN *BROKEN*... AND THE LOCKER WHERE HIS *THINGS* WERE STORED HAS BEEN *FORCED!*

IT'S NOT *POSSIBLE!* NOT WITH THE PATIENT IN *DEEP SHOCK*--

--NOT WITH THE *SPECIAL MEDICATION* I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO GIVE HIM!

ER... WHY HAVE WE **STOPPED**, MASTER-COM? IF YOU HAVE FURTHER **QUALMS** ABOUT EXCEEDING YOUR **AUTHORITY**, LET ME **ASSURE** YOU--

AN **ALARM** HAS GONE OUT FROM THE **HOS-PITAL AREA**--

--AND I'M **ALSO** RECEIVING A **WARNING SIGNAL** FROM THE **EXECUTIVE TOWER**--

"--SOMETHING IS **AMISS** IN SENATOR GREY-SHADE'S SUITE!"

A LITTLE **MORE** SHOULD **DO** IT...! IF I'VE GOT THE **RIGHT CIRCUITRY**--

AND IF THIS **INSULATED CLOTH** I CUT FROM ONE OF THE COUCHES KEEPS ME FROM **ELECTRO-CUTING** MYSELF, THEN--

ZDAK!

WISSHK!

--THE DOOR SEALS SHOULD SHORT CIRCUIT!

ARTOO DEETOO COULD HAVE DONE THAT WITHOUT THE **PYROTECHNICS**--

--BUT THEN **HE** WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO DO IT WITH A **SERVING KNIFE!**

QUESTION **NOW** IS: CAN I REACH THE **LIFT** BEFORE GREYSHADE'S GUARDS REACH **ME?!**

YOUR HUMAN **FRIENDS** SEEM TO OPERATE WITH THE SAME **PERSISTANCE** AS YOU TWO. IT IS MOST **INTERESTING**... BUT QUITE **FUTILE**, PARTIC-ULARLY FOR THE **PRINCESS**.

THE **ONLY ROUTE** FROM THE EXECUTIVE TOWER WILL LEAD HER INTO THE SENATOR'S **HANDPICKED SECURITY TEAM!**

WE MUST *PART* NOW. SENATOR GREYSHADE DIDN'T WANT TO BE *DISTURBED* WHILE WITH COMMANDER STROM... BUT HE HAS A *SPECIAL INTEREST* IN PRINCESS LEIA. I'LL INFORM HIM *PERSONALLY.*

MEANTIME, THERE WILL BE MANY SEARCHERS FOR THIS *SKYWALKER.* *YOU* COULD BE TAKEN TOO... AND I *CANNOT* INTERCEDE FURTHER.

YOU MUST PROCEED *WITHOUT* HELP FROM ME. SO LET ME GO ON *RECORD* AS ADVISING YOU *AVOID* THE *CROWDED CASINO AREA--*

--YOU MIGHT EASILY BECOME *LOST* AMID THE *MANY* DROIDS RUNNING ERRANDS AND PLACING BETS FOR THEIR *MASTERS* NOW THAT THE *BIG GAME* HAS STARTED.

BA-DEEP?

NO, ARTOO... *I* DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF HIM *EITHER.*

BUT... WE *MAY* HAVE GAINED A *FRIEND!*

AND SHORTLY, IN THE CROWDED CASINO AREA... THERE ARE *TWO MORE* DROIDS.

WE'RE SAFE, ARTOO... BUT THAT DOESN'T HELP POOR *MASTER LUKE* AND THE *PRINCESS!* IF ONLY WE COULD FIND *CAPTAIN SOLO* OR--

BIPEEP ABIT KIK!

I-IT'S HIM, ARTOO! BUT... HE'S *DOOMED!*

AND THERE'S *NOTHING* WE CAN DO!

WEEU!

WHICH BRINGS US BACK JUST A MOMENT OR SO BEYOND WHERE WE LEFT HAN...

NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT IS A VERY **BAD** MOMENT, AS HIS MULTI-ARMED FOE **CHARGES**...

...AND HE GROGGILY FUMBLES FOR HIS DROPPED **POWER SHIELD!**

GONNA **BURN** MY OWN HAND **GRABBIN'** IT... BUT IT BEATS HAVIN' A **DAGGER-THORN** BURIED IN MY CHEST!

AT LEAST... I'M **PRAYIN'** IT WILL!

=UNGHH= MUST HAVE BROKEN **RIBS**... HURTS TO **MOVE!**

THE THROW IS **WEAK**. HAN'S LUMBERING OPPONENT MIGHT **LAUGH**...IF HE CAME FROM A RACE THAT KNEW **HOW**. STILL... IT IS ON **TARGET**. AND, THOUGH LOW ON CRACKLING **ENERGY**...

...THE POWER SHIELD DOES WHAT HAN **WANTED** IT TO...

...MAKING **CONTACT** WITH THE **METAL STUDS** ON THE GIANT'S BOOTS! UNABLE TO KNOCK IT **ASIDE**, THE GLADIATOR HAS BUT **ONE** OPTION...

...TO FALL!

WUMM!

AND WHEN HE **RISES**...

...IT IS WITH THE TERRIBLE KNOWLEDGE THAT **ONE** DAGGER-THORN WAS **UNDER** HIS BODY WHEN IT STRUCK THE GROUND!

IT IS A **SMALL** WOUND, BARELY A **SCRATCH**...

WITH THE VENOM-DRENCHED THORN... IT IS **ENOUGH**.

RARRUUM!

AND HAN SUDDENLY FACES THE **PROSPECT**...

...OF BEING **SLAIN** BY ONE ALREADY **DEAD**!

SOMETHIN' BY MY **HEAD**...! IF I CAN **REACH** IT...

FOR IT IS **LIFELESS WEIGHT** THAT CRASHES DOWN UPON HIM... HIM AND THE HASTILY GRASPED **ROCK** THAT BEARS THE THORN'S **BRUNT**!

LET'S **HEAR** IT FOR THE ARENA'S **PLANNERS**--

KRAK!

--THEIR SETTINGS MAY BE **FAKE**... BUT THEY HAD THE CLASS TO BRING IN **REAL STONES**!

GREYSHADE! YOU SMOOTH-MOUTHED **FUMBLER**! **WHAT WENT WRONG?!**

I'M NOT **CERTAIN**, STROM. BUT BEAR IN **MIND**--

--THIS WAS ONLY A **PRELIMINARY MATCH**. SOLO MUST STILL ENDURE... **THE MAIN EVENT**!

AND **NEXT ISSUE** AS HAN FACES **THAT** CHALLENGE, **LUKE** COMES UNDER THE...

SHADOW OF A DARK LORD!

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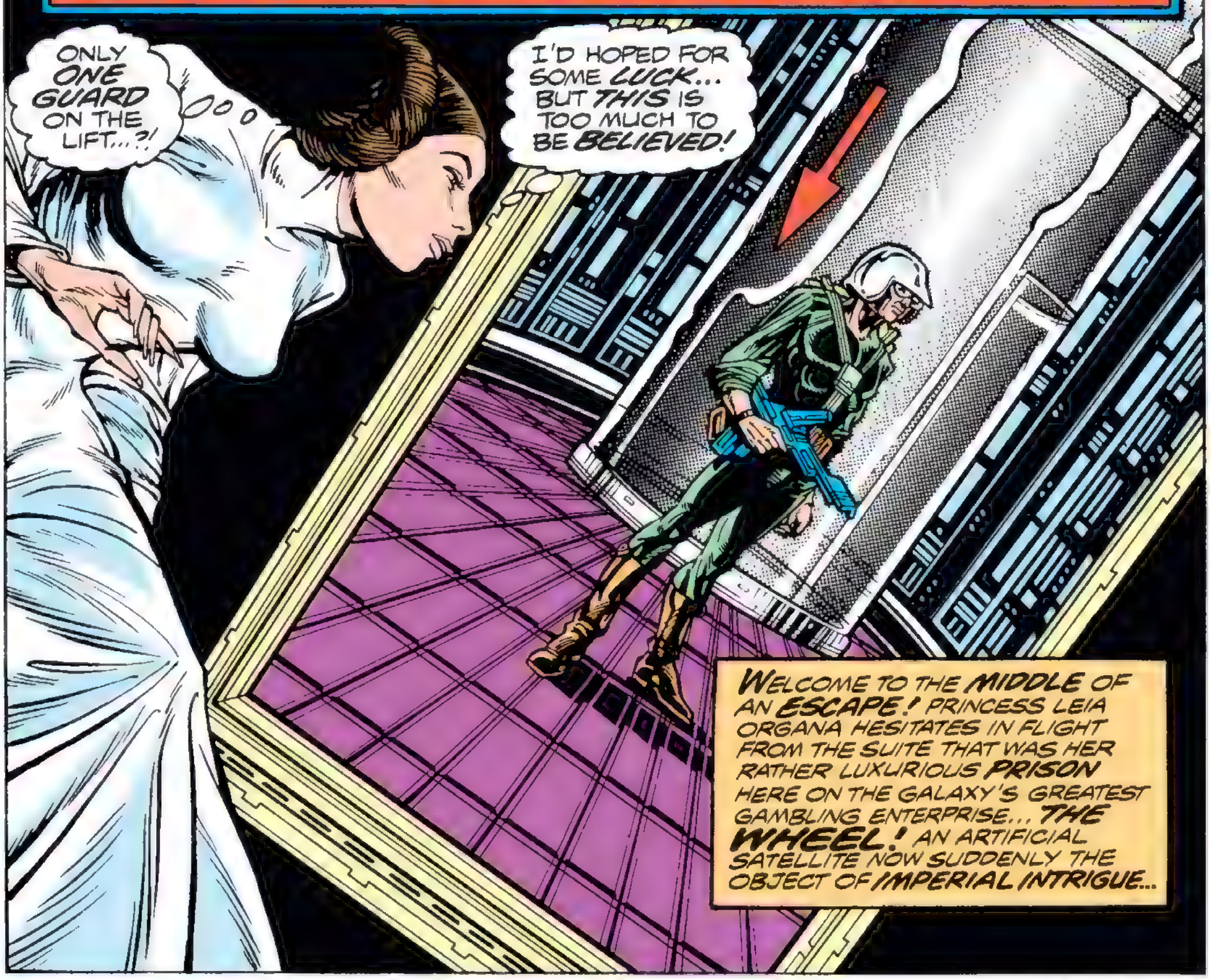
SHADOW of a DARK LORD!


ONLY ONE GUARD ON THE LIFT...?!
I'D HOPED FOR SOME LUCK... BUT THIS IS TOO MUCH TO BE BELIEVED!
WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE OF AN ESCAPE! PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA HESITATES IN FLIGHT FROM THE SUITE THAT WAS HER RATHER LUXURIOUS PRISON HERE ON THE GALAXY'S GREATEST GAMBLING ENTERPRISE... THE WHEEL! AN ARTIFICIAL SATELLITE NOW SUDDENLY THE OBJECT OF IMPERIAL INTRIGUE...

ARCHIE GOODWIN / CARMINE INFANTINO and GENE DAY / JOHN COSTANZA / GEORGE ROUSSOS / JIM SHOOTER
WRITER/EDITOR / ARTISTS / letterer / colorist / CONSULTING EDITOR

LGZ84

AND, ANXIOUS TO **HALT** THIS INTRIGUE, THE PRINCESS DOESN'T ALLOW SUSPICION...

...TO **SLOW** HER ESCAPE **LONG!**

HELP ME... I-I... ≥ **UHH**HHHH ≤

HEY! WHAT--?

THE WHEEL SECURITY GUARD IS AT A **DISADVANTAGE.** HE IS WELL-TRAINED AT HIS JOB...

...BUT **PART** OF THAT JOB IS TO PROVIDE **ASSISTANCE.** THUS, AS HE BENDS OVER A SEEMINGLY **STRICKEN VISITOR**...

...HE FINDS A SWIFT AND SURE **HAND** SEIZING HIS **SIDEARM!**

DROP YOUR **OTHER** WEAPON... AND **BACK OFF!**

I NEED SOME **ANSWERS**... AND YOUR IMMEDIATE **FUTURE** IS TIED TO HOW **WELL** YOU GIVE THEM!

WHY AREN'T THERE MORE **GUARDS** HERE IN THE **EXECUTIVE TOWER...?** THE WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR ISN'T THE TYPE TO LEAVE HIS QUARTERS **UNPROTECTED--**

-- PARTICULARLY WITH **ME** A PRISONER IN THEM!

MOST OF THE REGULARS ARE DISPATCHED ON **SPECIAL DUTY** BY THE ADMINISTRATOR HIMSELF.

THE **BIG GAME** IS IN PROGRESS, LADY! THE WHEEL'S **BUSIEST** TIME! PERHAPS SENATOR GREYSHADE FELT THEY'D BE NEEDED IN THE **CASINOS.**

FEDAK!

PERHAPS...! BUT KNOWING THE WAY MY ONE-TIME SENATORIAL COLLEAGUE'S CALCULATING **MIND** WORKS, IT'S MORE **LIKELY--**

--THAT "SPECIAL DUTY" IS AT A PLACE **I** HOPED TO REACH! WHICH MEANS I HAVE TO WORK ALL THE **FASTER**... AND **YOU** HAVE TO BE **STUN-BLASTED!**

STRIPPING THE FALLEN GUARD OF HIS **EQUIPMENT**, LEIA DRAGS HIM INTO A NEARBY STORAGE COMPARTMENT...

THEN HURRIES INTO THE LIFT... AND DROPS **DOWNWARD!**

WHETHER OR **NOT** SIMON GREYSHADE IS UP TO WHAT I **THINK** HE IS... I'LL STILL NEED **HELP.**

BUT THE FORCE KNOWS **WHERE** HAN, CHEWBACCA AND THE DROIDS HAVE **SCATTERED** TO IN THIS PLACE...!

WAIT! WHEN WE ALL FIRST **SEPARATED**...* HAN SAID TO MEET AT THE **CRIMSON CASINO.**

A LOT HAS HAPPENED **SINCE**... BUT IT MAY STILL BE WORTH **TRYING!**

MEANTIME, I CAN **LISTEN IN** ON THE GUARD'S **COMMUNICATOR**--

* WAY BACK IN **STAR WARS** #18. --ARCHIE.

--FOR ANY MORE **RECENT** DEVELOPMENTS.

TO THINK THIS ALL **STARTED** BY TRYING TO GET **MEDICAL HELP** FOR POOR LUKE...!

ONLY INSTEAD OF FINDING **SANCTUARY** HERE... WE FOUND THE **EMPIRE** AT WORK!

"FIRST THEY **PLUNDER** A MERCHANT SHIP TRANSPORTING **WHEEL GAMBLING PROFITS**, DISGUISING IT AS AN ACT OF THE **REBEL ALLIANCE**. AND WHEN **WE** HAPPEN UPON IT...

"...THEY TRY TO DESTROY THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** AND CLAIM IT WAS THE REBEL **PIRATE SHIP!**

"NOW, THEY'VE STRUCK AT A **PLEASURE CRAFT** LEAVING THE WHEEL... USING AN ALLIANCE **X-WING FIGHTER!**

"**ALL** TO TURN SENTIMENT AGAINST **OUR** CAUSE, AND SET THE **STAGE**...

...FOR TOTAL **PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE** OF A COMPLETE IMPERIAL **TAKEOVER** OF THE WHEEL AND ITS VAST, CONTINUOUS FLOW OF **PROFITS**...

...PROFITS THAT WILL GREATLY **STRENGTHEN** THE EMPEROR'S WAR MACHINE AND MAKE HIM EVEN **LESS** ACCOUNTABLE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS...

"...BRINGING HIM ONE **GIANT STRIDE** NEARER TO **CRUSHING** ANY AND **ALL** RESISTANCE!"

BUT THE SCHEME HERE MIGHT STILL BE **DISCREDITED**...IF WE'RE **QUICK** ENOUGH,

THOSE PIRATED WHEEL PROFITS ARE THE **PROOF** I NEED--

--AND THEY'RE BOUND TO BE WITH THIS SECTOR'S **IMPERIAL COMMANDER** ...WHO **FOLLOWED** US HERE!

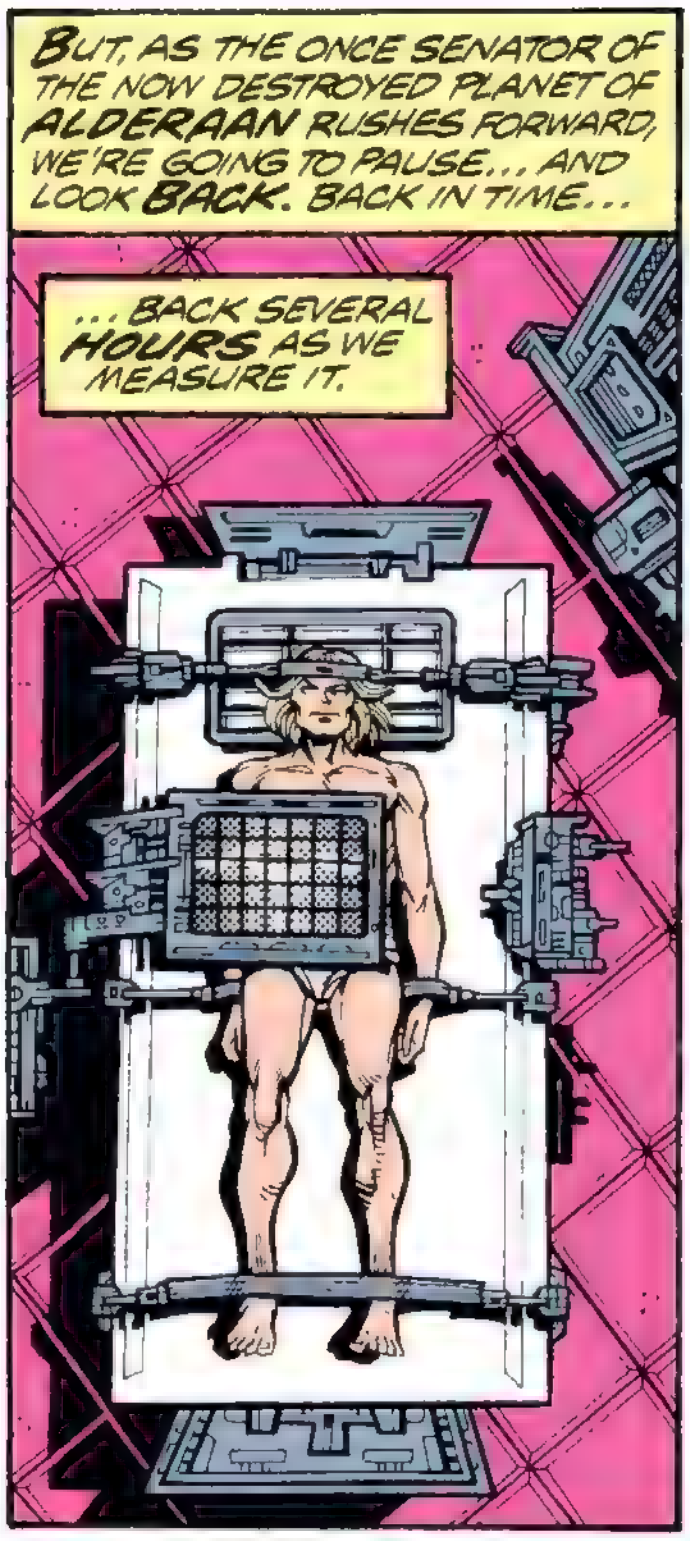
I DON'T KNOW **HOW** TO GET THAT LOOT OFF HIS **CRUISER**--

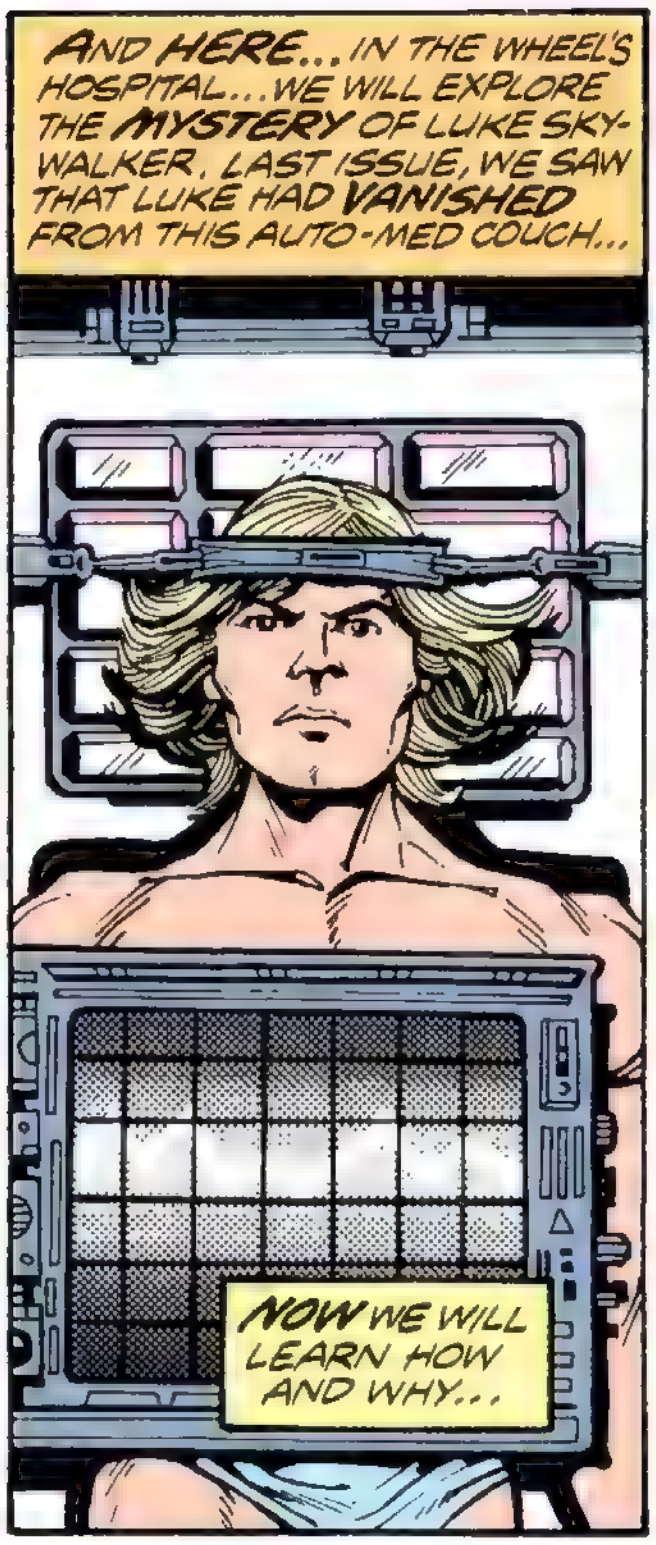
--PARTICULARLY SINCE I CAN'T FIGURE **WHAT** KIND OF GAME WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR **GREYSHADE** IS PLAYING IN ALL THIS--

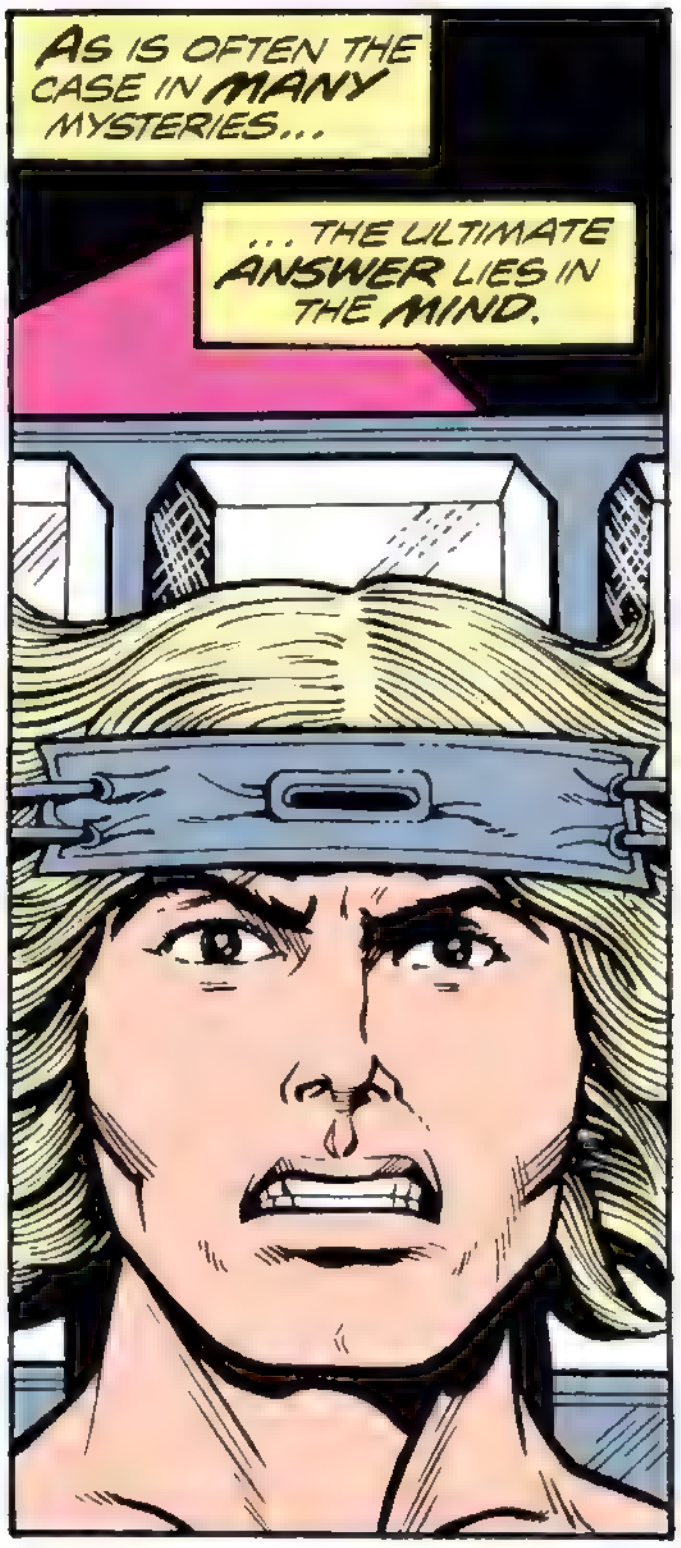
--BUT **NOTHING** IS GOING TO STOP ME FROM **TRYING**!

TO ALL

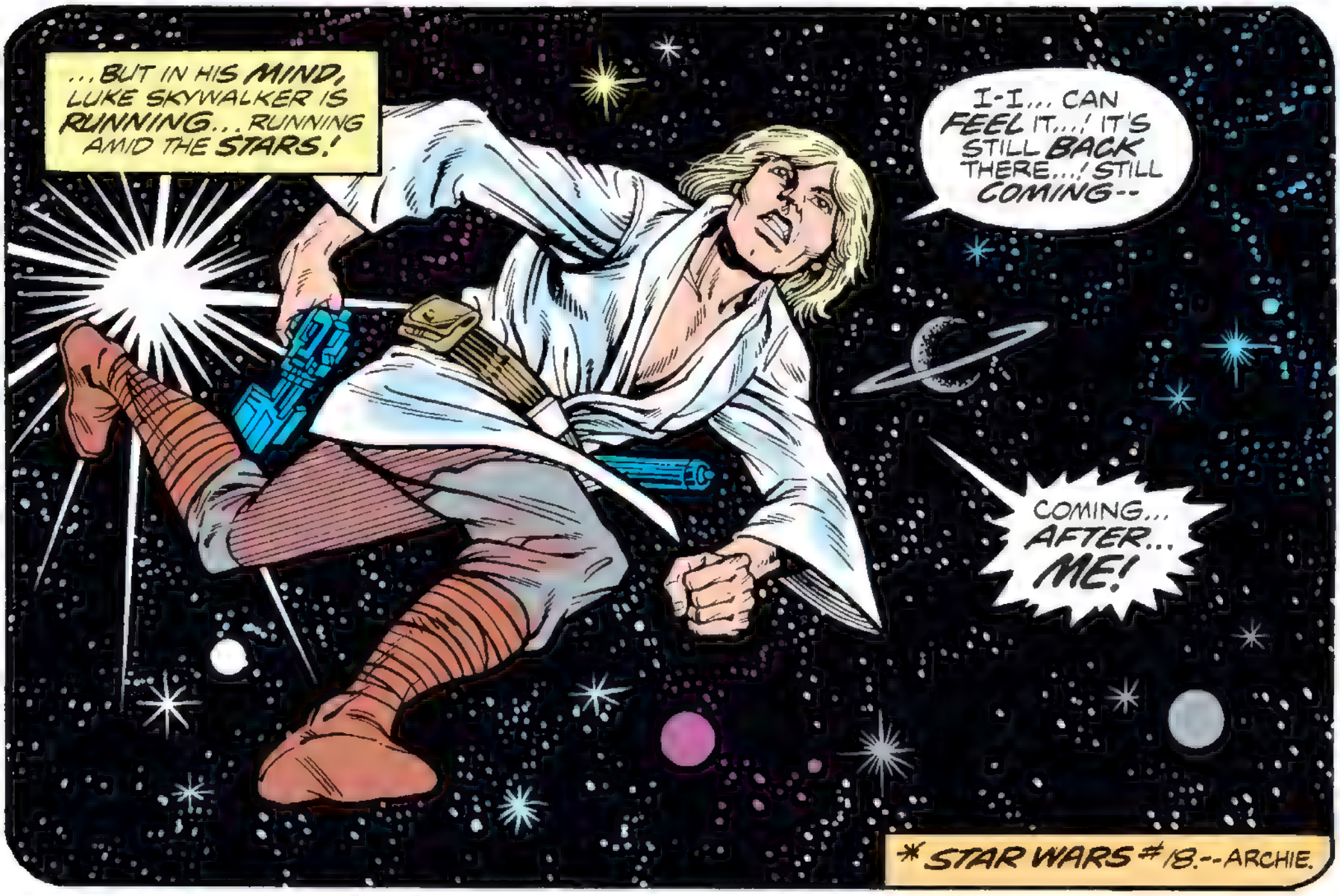
CASINO


BUT, AS THE ONCE SENATOR OF THE NOW DESTROYED PLANET OF ALDERAAN RUSHES FORWARD, WE'RE GOING TO PAUSE... AND LOOK BACK. BACK IN TIME...
...BACK SEVERAL HOURS AS WE MEASURE IT.


AND HERE... IN THE WHEEL'S HOSPITAL...WE WILL EXPLORE THE MYSTERY OF LUKE SKY-WALKER. LAST ISSUE, WE SAW THAT LUKE HAD VANISHED FROM THIS AUTO-MED COUCH...
NOW WE WILL LEARN HOW AND WHY...



LUKE SKYWALKER'S BODY LIES **MOTIONLESS**, STILL IN THE SAME **TRANCE-LIKE** STATE IT FELL INTO ABOARD THE MILLENNIUM FALCON WHEN, WHILE PRACTICING A **MEDI-TATION** ON THE FORCE, **SOMETHING** HAPPENED!* YES, HIS **BODY** DOES NOT MOVE...


...BUT IN HIS MIND, LUKE SKYWALKER IS RUNNING...RUNNING AMID THE STARS!
I-I... CAN FEEL IT...! IT'S STILL BACK THERE...! STILL COMING--
COMING... AFTER... ME!
*STAR WARS #18.--ARCHIE.

THERE'S NO ESCAPE, LUKE... NOT THIS WAY.

B-BEN...?

I'M WITH YOU, LUKE... AS IS THE FORCE. BUT YOU CANNOT RUN AWAY. YOU MUST FIGHT.

I-IT'S TOO STRONG, BEN...!

THE MOMENT I FELT IT... I KNEW! MAYBE I'M JUST A COWARD, B-BUT--

EVERYONE FEELS FEAR, LUKE... ESPECIALLY OF THE UNKNOWN.

THE COWARD FLEES FROM IT... THE BRAVE FACE IT, AND THEREBY, FIGHT IT.

I-I'LL... TRY. I'LL--

NO...!

IT'S NO USE, BEN...! THE BLASTER'S NOT STOPPING HIM!

HE KILLED YOU... HOW CAN I BEAT HIM?!

NOT WITH A BLASTER, YOUNG LUKE ...NOR EVEN YOUR FATHER'S LIGHT SABER.

A WEAPON IS ONLY A *TOOL*, LUKE... AN *EXTENSION* OF THE INNER-WILL! *TRUE POWER* MUST COME FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE SOUL--

YOU CAN *DO* IT, LUKE... *STRIKE!* FIGHT *BACK* WITH ALL THE POWER *WITHIN* YOU!

YES! WITH... ALL THE... *POWER* WITHIN...ME...!

AND AS AN EPIC **STRUGGLE** *BEGINS IN THE* **MIND** *OF THE TATOOINE FARM LAD TURNED STAR-WARRIOR, HIS SHOCK-STILLED BODY SUDDENLY* **TREMBLES**...*AND BEGINS ITS* **OWN** *FIGHT!*

I CAN... *DO* IT...! I *CAN*...! I...

THIS *FIGHT IS AGAINST THE* ***TRANCE*** *THAT BINDS HIM... AGAINST THE AUTOMATICALLY-ADMINISTERED* ***DRUGS*** *THAT ARE SENDING HIM EVER* ***DEEPER*** *INTO THAT TRANCE...*

...AND MECHANIZED ***RESTRAINTS,*** *CALCULATED FOR A PERSON SEEMINGLY NOT* ***CAPABLE*** *OF SUCH RESISTANCE...*

...ARE DEFINITELY NOT ***UP*** *TO THIS KIND OF* ***BATTLE!***

KRAK!

SNAP!

EYES STILL GLAZED BY DRUGS... MIND STILL RAGING WITH ITS OWN INNER-COMBAT...

...LUKE MOVES INSTINCTIVELY, SEIZING A BROKEN EQUIPMENT STRUT...

...AND USING IT TO ATTACK A WALL LOCKER CONTAINING HIS PERSONAL THINGS!

SPRANK!

MOMENTS LATER, BEFORE ALARMS CAN BRING HOSPITAL ORDERLIES, HE IS ON HIS WAY...

...RACING ALONG WHEEL ACCESS CORRIDORS...

...EVEN AS HE WAGES THE BATTLE IN HIS MIND!

THAT WAGING IS LONG AND HARD, BUT FINALLY, ULTIMATELY...

BEN...! HE'S FINISHED...! I'VE AVENGED YOU... BEATEN DARTH VADER!

NO, LUKE... IT'S NOT DARTH YOU'VE CONQUERED--

--MERELY A SHADOW OF HIM. A SHADOW THAT IS YOUR OWN FEAR--

ZAMP!

--THE FEAR THAT WAS MAKING YOU DRAW INTO YOURSELF... LOSE YOURSELF IN YOUR OWN MIND, PERHAPS FOREVER.

YOU'VE FOUGHT AND WON, YOUNG LUKE. NOW IT'S OVER. ALL OVER--

B-BEN...? BEN...!

NOT BEN, LUKE...! LEIA... AND THE DROIDS! THANK THE STARS YOU'VE FINALLY COME AROUND!

I'D JUST FOUND THREEPIO AND ARTOO IN THE CRIMSON CASINO WHEN A TRANSMISSION CAME THROUGH ABOUT YOU! A FULL RIOT ALERT--

B-BUT BY THE TIME WE GOT HERE--AS I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU--

--IT WAS ALL OVER!

I... I DID THIS...?! MUST'VE BEEN OUT OF MY HEAD... TOTALLY BERSERK--

--FIGHTING THAT TRANCE I WAS IN...!

FA-DEEP!

WHAT IS THIS PLACE...? HOW'D WE GET HERE...?! THE LAST I RECALL--

--I WAS DOING A MEDITATION, LETTING MY MIND DRIFT FREE, WHEN... W-WHEN--

I-I... TOUCHED SOMEONE ELSE'S MIND! ONLY FOR AN INSTANT... JUST IN PASSING. IT WAS TWISTED... EVIL... AND STRONG, PRINCESS!

SO STRONG IT MADE ME WANT TO HIDE... TO CRAWL INSIDE MYSELF AND NEVER COME OUT.

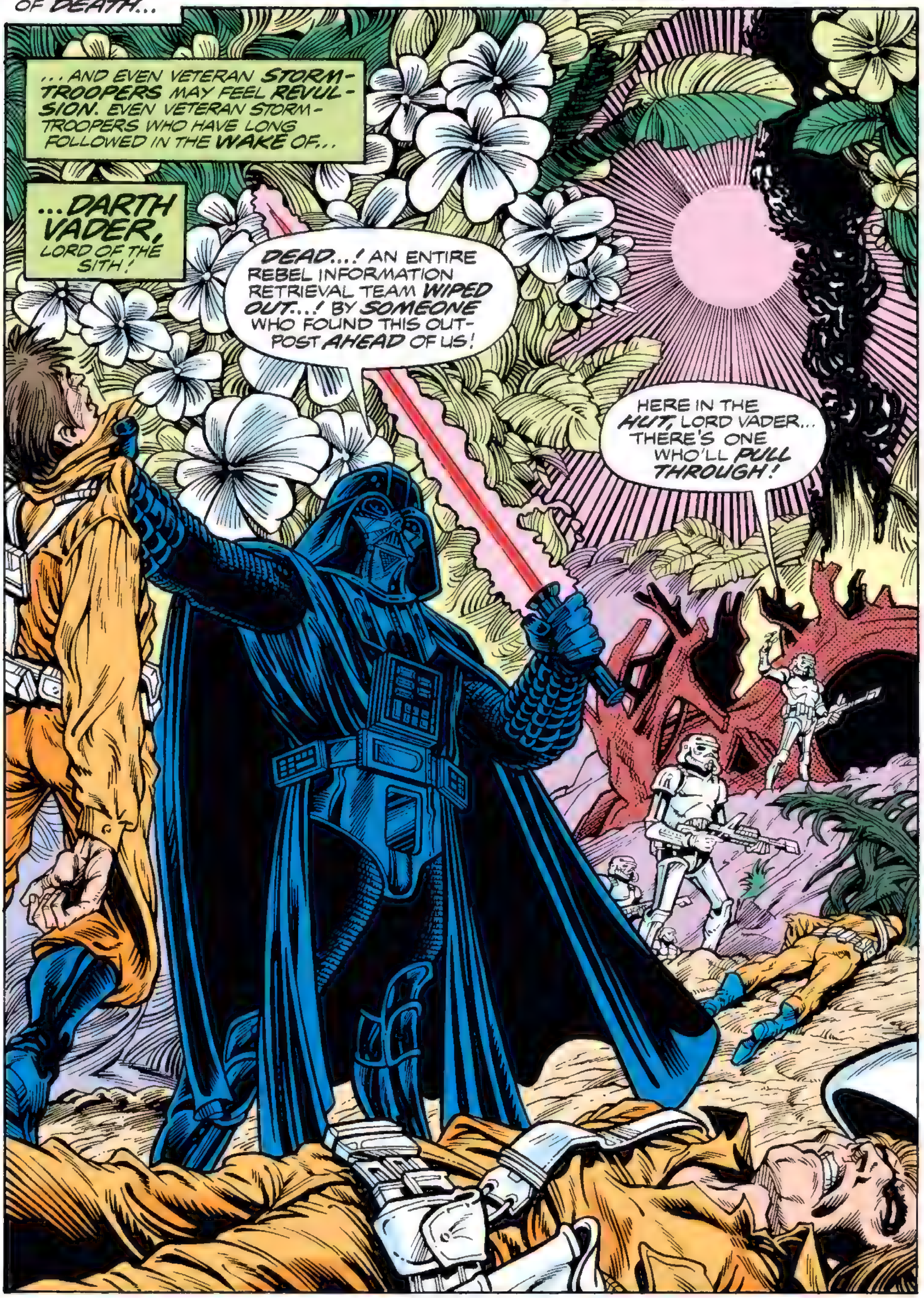
WORST OF ALL, THAT CONTACT MAKES CERTAIN WHAT WE COULD ONLY SUSPECT UP TO NOW--

WHAT, LUKE--?

DARTH VADER IS ALIVE--!

ALIVE... AND SEARCHING FOR US!

INTERLUDE: THE AIR OF THE MID-SYSTEMS PLANET **ULTAAR** IS THICK, CLOYINGLY HEAVY WITH THE OVER-RIPE SCENT OF GIANT BLOSSOMS GROWN HERE FOR HARVEST. MIX THIS WITH AN ACRID HAZE OF SPENT **LASER-BOLTS,** THE TELLING STENCH OF **DEATH...**


...AND EVEN VETERAN STORM-TROOPERS MAY FEEL REVUL-SION. EVEN VETERAN STORM-TROOPERS WHO HAVE LONG FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF...
...DARTH VADER, LORD OF THE SITH!
DEAD...! AN ENTIRE REBEL INFORMATION RETRIEVAL TEAM WIPED OUT...! BY SOMEONE WHO FOUND THIS OUT-POST AHEAD OF US!
HERE IN THE HUT, LORD VADER... THERE'S ONE WHO'LL PULL THROUGH!

SOON, THE PRE-FAB'S SHADOWED INTERIOR ECHOES WITH THE HOLLOW, SINISTER HISS OF THE DARK LORD'S BREATH MASK...

I'VE ADMINISTERED THE PROPER DRUGS, SIR... HE SHOULD ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.

WHO DID THIS, REBEL...? WHY?

P-PLEASE... THE PAIN... I NEED SOMETHING... FOR THE... PAIN...!

FIRST, THE ANSWERS, REBEL.

I-IT... WAS JUST ONE MAN...! RATHER... HALF MAN... HALF MACHINE! HE'S A... BORG...! CYBORG! CALLED HIMSELF... VALANCE...!*

A BOUNTY HUNTER... SEARCHING FOR THE GROUP... THAT'S BEEN AIDING PRINCESS LEIA...!

ESPECIALLY A BOY... A BOY WITH TWO DROIDS!

* WE MET HIM IN STAR WARS #16.--ARCH.

WE DIDN'T HAVE... INFORMATION HE NEEDED...! BUT S-SOMEONE TRIED... TO DRAW ON HIM... AND... AND... THIS HAPPENED...!

NOW... PLEASE... HELP EASE... THE PAIN...!

WITH NEARLY SUPERNATURAL SWIFTNESS... A LIGHT SABER FLASHES!

EASE THE PAIN, REBEL...?

KRAK!

I'LL END IT ENTIRELY!

INTERESTING. I SEEM TO HAVE A RIVAL, PERHAPS EVEN A FORMIDABLE ONE.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SHIP, LORD VADER...!

IT'S **CAPTAIN WERMIS**, VADER. WE'VE DONE QUITE A THOROUGH **CHECK** ON THOSE **COORDINATES** YOU GAVE US.

FRANKLY, THEY JUST MARK **DEAD SPACE**... NOTHING **THERE**! NOT EVEN A WISP OF **NEBULA DUST**!

THEN THE **PRESENCE** I FELT ON OUR **WAY** HERE CAME FROM A **PASSING SPACECRAFT**..!

WELL, **YOU 'RE** THE EXPERT ON **METAPHYSICS**-- THE **FORCE** AND ALL THAT-- BUT IT SOUNDS A BIT **VAGUE** TO BE TYING UP MY TECH-NICIANS, DEAR BOY.

WERMIS, I HAVEN'T BEEN A **BOY** FOR SOME YEARS, AND NO ONE HAS **EVER** RATED ME AS **DEAR**--

IF THERE IS **ANOTHER** MIND IN THIS GALAXY STILL CAPABLE OF EVOKING THE **FORCE**-- NO MATTER **HOW** WEAKLY-- IT POSES NEARLY AS GREAT A THREAT TO THE **EMPIRE**--

--AS WIMPISH **INCOMPETENTS** LIKE **YOU**!

I WANT THE **NEAREST** DESTINATION A SHIP PASSING US IN THOSE COORDINATES MIGHT HAVE BEEN **HEADED** FOR... WE'LL **START** WITH THAT.

THIS WORLD MAY HAVE PROVED A **DEAD END**... BUT THE **TRIP** HERE MAY HAVE PUT US ON SOMETHING **GREATER**!

AND SHORTLY, **TIE FIGHTERS** *THUNDER UPWARD INTO THE ULTAARIAN SKIES...*

I **HAVE** THAT DESTIN-ATION, LORD VADER! A MAN-MADE **PLEASURE SATELLITE**--

--THE **WHEEL**!

THEN, WERMIS, IT BECOMES **OUR** DESTINATION AS **WELL**!

THE INTERLUDE ON ULTAAR **ENDS** WITH THE **DEPARTURE** OF AN IMPERIAL BATTLE CRUISER...

WHILE ON THE **WHEEL**, A TANGLED WEB OF EVENTS **GROWS**...

MASTER-COM... I LEFT ORDERS **NOT** TO BE INTERRUPTED!

SENATOR GREYSHADE, I WOULDN'T BE DOING MY **DUTY** AS THE WHEEL'S MASTER COMPUTER IF I DIDN'T **REPORT** TO YOU PRINCESS LEIA'S **ESCAPE**..

WHAT--?!

YOU WERE **WITH** HER! SHE **COULDN'T** GET AWAY!

I FEAR I **WASN'T** WITH HER, SIR. SINCE THE DOORS WERE **SEALED** AND YOUR OWN **HAND-PICKED GUARDS** WERE ON TOWER SECURITY DUTY, THERE SEEMED NO REASON--

I SENT THOSE MEN ON A **SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT!**

THAT **DATA** WASN'T PROCESSED THROUGH ME, SIR. **WHEEL POLICY** REQUIRES--

I'M **ADMINISTRATOR**, MASTER-COM! I CAN **MAKE**, **BREAK** OR **BEND** WHEEL POLICY!

NOW WHAT WERE **YOU** DOING THAT WAS SO **VITAL**?!

CONTINUING MY **STUDY** OF THE PRINCESS' TWO **DROIDS**... THREEPIO AND ARTOO-DEETOO.

I DIDN'T **AUTHORIZE** ANY SUCH STUDY! YOU'RE IN **REBELLION!**

I DON'T **BELIEVE** SO, SENATOR. I **DID** SOLICIT PERMISSION... PERHAPS A BIT **VAGUELY.*** BUT YOU DIDN'T **DENY** IT, SO TECHNICALLY--

TECHNICALLY MY OWN **MASTER-COMPUTER** IS DEVOTING HIMSELF TO **REBEL DROIDS!**

* THAT WAS IN **STAR WARS** #19.--ARCHIE.

AT THE RISK OF **IMPERTINENCE**, SIR... AREN'T **YOU** DOING THE **SAME** WITH PRINCESS LEIA, A REBEL **LEADER?** OBVIOUSLY, YOUR ACTIONS ARE CONNECTED TO THE HUMAN EMOTION OF **LOVE**--

--WHILE SOME CHORD IS STRUCK IN MY **OWN** CIRCUITRY BY THE MUTUAL **RESPECT** AND **FRIENDSHIP** BETWEEN THE REBEL DROIDS AND THEIR MASTERS.

IT IS *UNMACHINE-LIKE*, BUT... I WISH *I* HAD SUCH A RELATIONSHIP, SIR. NO DOUBT AFTER THIS *CONVERSATION*, YOU'LL WISH TO *ERASE* MY MEMORY BANKS OR *WORSE*--

BUT EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE ONE OF THE MOST *UNSCRUPULOUS* WHEEL ADMINISTRATORS IN MY *EXPERIENCE*, YOU GAVE ME THIS HUMANOID FORM AND PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY--SOME HUMAN *CHARACTERISTICS* AS WELL.

THEREFORE, IF EVER *I* HAD A HUMAN *FRIEND*--

--I WOULD LIKE IT TO BE *YOU*, SENATOR GREYSHADE.

NATURALLY THIS SEEMS *GROTESQUE* TO YOU, SIR... BUT SURELY NO MORE SO THAN YOUR *OWN* EFFORTS TO FURTHER A *ROMANCE* WITH PRINCESS LEIA BY *ELIMINATING* THOSE YOUNG MEN WHO *ACCOMPANIED* HER HERE AND--

MASTER-
COM--

--GET BACK TO THE EXECUTIVE TOWER AND *WHEEL* BUSINESS.

PROBLEMS, GREYSHADE? YOU'VE BEEN OUT HERE A LONG *TIME*. MISSED SOME *FINE* PRELIMINARY CONTESTS--

--IF IT'S SOME KIND OF *CROWD CONTROL* MATTER AS A RESULT OF THE *BIG GAME*, REMEMBER MOST OF MY *CREW* IS ON SHORE LEAVE HERE... WE'LL BE *HAPPY* TO GIVE YOUR *SECURITY FORCE* A HAND!

N-NOTHING LIKE *THAT*, COMMANDER STROM... JUST *DETAILS*. PERHAPS--

--IT'S GIVEN ME A LITTLE *TOO MUCH* TO *THINK* ABOUT.

AND SOME OF SIMON GREYSHADE'S TROUBLED THOUGHTS ARE SURELY HERE... ABOARD IMPERIAL COMMANDER STROM'S LIGHT CRUISER AT ITS WHEEL DOCK.

FOR HERE, HIS CAREFULLY SELECTED TEAM OF SECURITY GUARDS ARE PAYING A VISIT TO THE SMALL SKELETON CREW LEFT ON DUTY!

OUR MEN ARE BRINGING UP THE STRONG BOXES NOW!

THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM!

RIGHT IN THE HOLD...! THE EMPIRE'S LONG ON POWER, BUT SHORT ON IMAGINATION!

WHAT LUCK FINDING THOSE PIRATED WHEEL PROFITS?!

MOMENTS LATER, THE ATTACKERS EMERGE FROM THE CRUISER'S DOCKING TUBE...

ARE YOU CERTAIN WE GOT EVERYONE? IT'S OUR HEADS AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATOR'S IF THERE ARE ANY WITNESSES!

THERE'S NOTHING ABOARD THAT SHIP NOW BUT GHOSTS AND AN EMPTY HOLD!

BUT THERE ARE OBSERVERS TO THIS SCENE!

ARTOO'S GETTING THIS ON TAPE, PRINCESS... WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

WE FOLLOW THEM, LUKE... WHEREVER THEY'RE TAKING THOSE STRONG BOXES!

WELL, I NEEDED SOMETHING TO SHAKE THAT DARTH VADER BUSINESS FROM MY MIND... THIS SHOULD BE PLENTY!

BUT WE'LL LEARN ABOUT THAT NEXT ISSUE. RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE TO LOOK IN ON THE MEDICAL SECTION OF THE WHEEL GLADIATOR PITS...

...WHERE A CERTAIN RELUCTANT GLADIATOR IN THE BIG GAME IS JUST BEING DECLARED...

--FIT FOR ACTION! WITH THAT HEALING NARCO-MIST THE MEDI-DROID'S SPRAYING, SOLO--

--YOU WON'T EVEN NOTICE THOSE BROKEN RIBS FROM YOUR PRELIMINARY BOUT.*

YEAH--?

I'D BE MORE CONVINCED IF IT WERE YOUR RIBS UNDER DISCUSSION.

* FOUGHT LAST ISH.--ARCH.

SUPPOSE I DECIDED TO CALL IT QUITS... TAKE MY WINNINGS AND RUN?

THAT'S PERMISSABLE, SOLO. THESE CONTESTS ARE TO THE DEATH, BUT WE AREN'T BARBARIANS... NO ONE PARTICIPATES AGAINST THEIR WILL.

HOWEVER--

WHILE YOUR WINNINGS WILL COVER ALL FINES FOR THE ILLEGAL ENTRY ONTO THE WHEEL OF YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS--

--THERE'S STILL THE MATTER OF DOCKING AND MAINTENANCE FEES FOR ONE FREIGHTER, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON.

TO SAY NOTHING OF TWO DROIDS PAWNED FOR A GAMBLING STAKE, SINCE LOST IN THE CASINOS.

OKAY, OKAY! WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE OF ALL THIS SUNSHINE AND GOOD CHEER?

VERY SIMPLE. QUIT NOW, WE KEEP THE FREIGHTER AND THE DROIDS... YOU BOARD AN IMPERIAL PRISON SHIP. DESTINATION: THE SPICE MINES OF KESSEL!

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS...?

YEAH. WHICH WAY TO THE MAIN EVENT?

LIKE THE PRELIMINARY CONTESTS, IT'S BEING FOUGHT WITHIN THE LARGE CENTRAL SPHERE THAT FORMS THE WHEEL'S HUB...

UNLIKE THE PRELIMINARY CONTESTS...

...IT'S BEING FOUGHT IN ZERO-GRAVITY!

BRUTE STRENGTH CAN'T COUNT FOR TOO MUCH UNDER THESE CONDITIONS... MAYBE I'VE GOT A CHANCE AFTER ALL!

I'LL KNOW BETTER WHEN I SEE THE COMPETITION. THEY'RE LETTING IN THE OTHER PRELIMINARY WINNERS NOW, SO I CAN--

OH, NO...! ONE OF 'EM IS CHEWIE!!

ROWRK!

NEXT ISSUE → TO THE LAST GLADIATOR!

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THERE'S *NO CHOICE* IN THIS CRAZY *ARENA,* CHEWIE--

--LIKE IT OR *NOT* YOU GOTTA *KILL ME!!*

INFANTINO/ WACEK

HAN SOLO VS. CHEWBACCA--

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IT LOOKS LIKE DEEP SPACE... BUT THAT IS **ILLUSION.** DESPITE THE FLOATING PLANETOIDS, THE SHIMMERING STAR FIELD, THE ZERO GRAVITY... THIS IS AN **ARENA!**

WORRK!

AND **HERE,** FOR THE PLEASURE AND EXCITEMENT OF PATRONS OF THE **WHEEL,** THE GALAXY'S ULTIMATE GAMBLING ESTABLISHMENT... **A DUEL** TO THE **DEATH** IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

CHEWIE...! AW, **NO!** DON'T TELL ME **YOU** GOT ROPED INTO THIS **MADNESS** TOO?!

AND UNFORTUNATELY FOR **HAN SOLO** AND HIS WOOKIEE **FRIEND** AND **FIRST MATE,** THIS DUEL WILL BE FOUGHT...

to the last gladiator!

LG 313

BUT THERE IS **NO TIME** TO CURSE, CRY, OR COMPLAIN, AS A **VOICE** SUDDENLY ECHOES FROM CONCEALED **SPEAKERS**...

ATTENTION, ALL GLADIATORS! YOUR **WEAPONS** ARE NOW ACTIVATED--

COMBAT MAY COMMENCE... **STARTING NOW!**

--**ESPECIALLY** IN ZERO GRAVITY WHERE, UNLESS YOU'RE **GOOD,** THE **FORCE** OF YOUR OWN SHOT CAN **PROPEL** YOU!

AND WHEN THE **VICTIM** OF THAT PROPULSION **COLLIDES** WITH ONE OF THE MANY DRIFTING PLANETOIDS...

BA-WHOOM!

AND COMMENCE IT DOES... WITH A VENGEANCE!

EVERYBODY'S QUICK ON THE *TRIGGER*, HUH...? WELL, I'M AS *FAST* AS THE NEXT GUY... BUT WITH THESE *NEEDLE RAYS* AN ACCURATE SHOT IS KIND'A *TRICKY*--

FIGURED THE WHEEL MANAGEMENT WOULDN'T HAVE THOSE THINGS *PURELY* FOR DECORATION!

LET'S HOPE THAT'S *ALL* THEY DO! AND--

CRIPES!

ALL *RIGHT*, PERSISTENT! TO *SURVIVE* I'VE GOTTA DEAL GRIEF TO *SOMEONE* ...MIGHT AS WELL START WITH *YOU!*

B-BUT ...WHAT'S *WITH* THIS CRUMMY *BLASTER*?!

NOT ACTIVATED! THERE'S NOTHIN' BETWEEN ME AN COMIN' OUT OF THIS FREE-FOR ALL DEAD--

KLIK!

KLIK!

--EXCEPT THIS RAY SHIELD!

IT COULDN'T HOLD UP TO STANDARD BLASTER-FIRE... BUT ITS REFRACTORY COATING DEFLECTS THESE NEEDLE RAYS JUST FINE!

IN FACT, IF YOU CAN GET THE ANGLE RIGHT--

--IT'S LIKE HAVING A SECOND WEAPON!

BUT AS HAN HIMSELF HAS NOTED, IN NEGATIVE GRAVITY, EVERY ACTION MUST PRODUCE A REACTION...

...AND IN THIS CASE, THE COST OF DEFLECTING THE NEEDLE RAYS IS TO BE DRIVEN BACKWARD. BACKWARD TOWARD...

...ONE OF THE FLOATING DEATH TRAPS...

...WHICH MASQUERADE AS PLANETOIDS!

ZRAAAK!

CHEWIE! GREAT TIMING, OL' BUDDY! I MUST'VE HIT A FORCE FIELD--

--THAT SET OFF THIS THING'S VAPORIZER BEAMS!

SHRAAAK!

DUNNO WHAT OTHER HIDDEN DELIGHTS THESE LITTLE SUCKERS HOLD--

--BUT MAYBE WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO FIGURE A WAY OUT OF THIS MESS!

I'LL GUARD YOUR BACK WITH MY SHIELD...START USIN' YOUR NEEDLE RAY ON OUR FELLOW CONTESTANTS!

WAARRK!

YOURS DIDN'T WORK SO YOU DITCHED IT?!

Y'KNOW, FUR-FACE...I THINK WE'VE BEEN HAD!

SEEMED SUSPICIOUS WHEN I GOT STUCK WAY OUT OF MY CLASS IN THE PRELIMINARIES,* BUT THIS CLINCHES IT, BIG BUDDY!

SOMEBODY'S WORKING OVERTIME TO SEE WE DON'T COME OUT OF THIS ANYWAY BUT DEAD!

*ISSUE #20. --ARCHIE.

AND I'D BET A CARGO OF SPICE THAT IT'S ALL CONNECTED TO OUR DISCOVERING THAT THE EMPIRE ROBBED A PRIVATE CARGO SHIP AND TRIED TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A REBEL ATTACK!*

*WAY BACK IN STAR WARS #18. --ARCHIVIST ARCH.

GRORRK!

SURE! THERE'S PROBABLY A *LOT* MORE TO IT THAN THAT. BUT THE ONLY WAY *WE'LL* EVER FIND OUT--

--IS TO GET OURSELVES A *FIGHTING CHANCE* IN THIS STUPID GAME!

THAT MEANS *OFFENSIVE WEAPONS*, PAL! AND IF I'VE ANGLED THE RICOCHET *CORRECTLY*--

FORGET IT, CORELLIAN! YOU'VE *MISSED!*

VADOOM!

DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU THINK I'M *AIMING* AT, ACE! I WANTED THAT *PLANETOID* BEHIND YOU!

SWIM *AGAINST* THE EXPLOSION'S *SHOCK WAVES*, CHEWIE--

AND GET *SET*! TWO OWNERLESS *NEEDLE RAYS* ARE DRIFTIN' OUR WAY!

BUT EXCEPT AMONG BETTORS PLAYING **LONG SHOTS**, THIS AUDACIOUS MANEUVER DRAWS NO CHEERS, PARTICULARLY IN...

...THE **ROYAL LOUNGE** OF THE GRAND CASINO.

BLAST YOU, GREYSHADE! YOU'VE BEEN *TOO CLEVER*--

--AND THE SPICE SMUGGLER AND HIS WOOKIEE COMPANION ARE *BENEFITTING* FROM IT!

YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN *ALL* OF PRINCESS LEIA'S FRIENDS TO ME FOR *EXECUTION* WHEN I FIRST PURSUED THE MILLENNIUM FALCON HERE!

I KNOW *SUBTLETY* IS DIFFICULT FOR THE MILITARY MIND, STROM--

--BUT *YOUR* WAY ATTRACTS ATTENTION AND I DON'T THINK THE EMPIRE *WANTS* THAT!

NOT WHEN THEY'RE TRYING TO *FOOL* EVERYONE INTO BELIEVING THAT THE WHEEL AND ITS PATRONS HAVE BECOME *TARGETS* OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE--

--THEREBY JUSTIFYING AN *IMPERIAL TAKEOVER* OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT AND ITS FANTASTIC *PROFITS*... WITHOUT FRIGHTENING AWAY THE *PAYING CUSTOMERS!*

NOW SIT DOWN AND *TRUST* ME TO DO THIS *RIGHT!*

TRUST A MAN WHOSE REPUTATION IN THE IMPERIAL SENATE WAS FOR *TREACHERY,* AND WHO NOW USES HIS POSITION AS *WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR* TO FURTHER A SCHOOL BOY CRUSH WITH OUR *FOE,* LEIA ORGANA?!

STUPIDLY ENOUGH, I'VE BEEN *DOING* THAT, GREYSHADE...AND I'M NOT PLEASED WITH THE *RESULTS!*

THEN START WATCHING THE *SCREEN* AGAIN! THE FACT THAT HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA HAVE *TEAMED UP* IN THE GAMES MEANS *NOTHING*--

NOTHING?! IT MEANS THEY *BOTH* COULD SURVIVE...LIVE TO BLURT OUT *ALL* THEY KNOW!

AS GLADIATORS, THEY BOTH SIGNED *CONTRACTS,* STROM. CONTRACTS ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE MATCHES ARE TO THE *DEATH*... AND THAT THERE CAN BE ONLY *ONE WINNER.*

SHOULD THEY *HESITATE* OR FAIL TO *COMPLY* ...IT'S GROUNDS FOR BOTH TO BE *SLAIN!*

AND FRIENDS LIKE *THAT* COULD HARDLY KILL EACH OTHER *WITHOUT* HESITATING...!

GREYSHADE, EACH TIME I THINK THIS UNEASY PARTNERSHIP OF OURS WAS A *MISTAKE*--

--YOU COME UP WITH AN IMPRESSIVE BIT OF *CHICANERY* TO PROVE ME *WRONG!*

NATURALLY, STROM. I'M A *POLITICIAN.*

OR *WAS* UNTIL THE EMPEROR DISSOLVED THE *SENATE!* NOW I'M LITTLE MORE THAN A *HIRED HOST*--

--AND JUDGING BY THIS *LOCATOR SIGNAL,* I HAVE TO FULFILL THAT *OBLIGATION ELSEWHERE!*

NOT SO *FAST,* SENATOR! YOU WERE *NERVOUS* AND *EDGY* EARLIER...* NOW SUDDENLY, IT'S ALL *SMILES* AND *CHARM!*

YOU'RE *UP* TO SOMETHING! WHAT COULD BE *MORE URGENT* NOW THAN *OUR* BUSINESS?! UNLESS YOU'RE--

Y-YOU'RE... YOU...

* OR *LAST ISSUE,* EARTH TIME.--ARCH.

AND THE IMPERIAL COMMANDER FOR THIS GALACTIC SECTOR SUDDENLY STAGGERS...AND FALLS!

I MAY NOT RESPECT YOUR *MIND,* STROM--

--BUT I'M *AWED* BY YOUR *CONSTITUTION!* THE *DRUG* IN YOUR DRINKS SHOULD HAD YOU *SNORING* LONG BEFORE THIS!

BUT INTRIGUE IS NOT THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF SIMON GREYSHADE, FOR AMID THE MANY HALLS AND ACCESS CORRIDORS IN THE ARTIFICIAL SATELLITE'S DOCKING AREA...

THERE'S A *BAY* AHEAD, PRINCESS! THOSE SECURITY GUARDS WE'RE *TRAILING* WENT INSIDE!

THEY MUST BE PUTTING THOSE STOLEN *STRONG BOXES* ABOARD A *SHIP,* LUKE!

BA 1(

BRRT-A-DE E-P!

ARTOO IS SAYING HE NEEDS TO BE AT THE *BAY DOOR* IN ORDER TO CONTINUE *TAPING*, YOUR HIGHNESS.

THAT'S *RISKY*! WE'VE ALREADY GOT ENOUGH TO *PROVE* THE LOOT EVERYONE THINKS WAS PIRATED BY *REBELS* ACTUALLY WAS HIDDEN ON THE IMPERIAL COMMANDER'S *CRUISER*--

--UNTIL *GREYSHADE'S* GUARDS *STOLE* IT FROM THE *EMPIRE'S* CREW!

STILL... IT WOULD *BE USEFUL* TO LEARN WHAT MY ONETIME SENATORIAL COLLEAGUE IS *REALLY* UP TO!

WE'VE DONE *OKAY* SO FAR! IF I *COVER* ARTOO... WE'LL BE *FINE*!

THEN, WITH A PNEUMATIC HISS, THE DOCKING BAY DOOR SHOOTS FULLY OPEN TO REVEAL...

WE'RE THE SENATOR'S *HANDPICKED ELITE*, FARM-BOY! DID YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS *TRULY* IMAGINE--

--WE COULD BE *FOLLOWED* ON OUR OWN TERRITORY AND *NEVER* CATCH ON?!

BLOOP!

BUT DESPITE THE **CLOTHES** HE WEARS, LUKE SKYWALKER HASN'T **TRULY** BEEN A FARM-BOY...

...SINCE THE BATTLE OF THE **DEATH STAR!**

ARTOO! GET **OUT** OF HERE WITH THAT TAPE!

AND BY THE TIME THE GUARDS REALIZE THEY'VE LET APPEARANCES **DECEIVE** THEM...LUKE IS ROLLING AND **FIRING!**

FOOM!

FTOW!

VOOM!

THEN, HE IS **WITHIN** THE BAY...

...AND BACK ON HIS FEET...

VOOP!

PVAM!

VRRT!

VEEZIIP!

...**CHARGING** UP THE LOADING RAMP OF THE DOCKED SPACECRAFT!

PVAM!

BUT IN THE CORRIDOR **OUTSIDE**, AS PRINCESS LEIA MOVES TO **HELP**...

DON'T **RUSH**, YOUR HIGHNESS--

SINCE I'M GOING THAT WAY **MYSELF**...I'LL **ACCOMPANY** YOU.

THAT WAY YOU WON'T HAVE TO CARRY THAT HEAVY **BLASTER.**

GREYSHADE!

YES! YOUR ESCAPE* HASN'T PROVEN THE INCONVENIENCE I FEARED IT WOULD--

YOU'VE MANAGED TO FIND YOUR WAY TO THE VERY SPOT I INTENDED TO BRING YOU!

*LEIA BROKE OUT OF THE WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR'S SUITE LAST ISSUE.--ARCHIE.

THAT SHIP YOUR GALLANT YOUNG FRIEND SEEMS BENT ON CONQUERING IS MY PRIVATE YACHT!

SINCE ONLY MY HAND-PRINTS CAN ACTIVATE ITS CONTROL LOCKS, LET'S ARRANGE A TRUCE BEFORE HE--OR MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE CRAFT-- IS DAMAGED.

IN OUR SENATE DAYS, I PRIDED MYSELF ON SEEING THROUGH ALL YOUR SCHEMES--

BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M QUITE CONFUSED ABOUT JUST WHAT YOU'RE AFTER!

DON'T WORRY, PRINCESS, I'M ABOUT TO EXPLAIN--

--AND REST ASSURED, IT'S MORE DESPICABLE AND UNSCRUPULOUS THAN YOU USUALLY EXPECT OF ME!

INTERLUDE: A STAR-DESTROYER CLASS IMPERIAL BATTLE CRUISER LEAPS THROUGH HYPER-SPACE. ITS GREAT WEDGE SHAPE PIERCING THE DOPPLER-DISTORTED HEAVENS...

...MOVING AT THE URGING OF ONE VOICE. A SINISTER VOICE, RASPING FROM THE CONFINES OF A BREATH MASK...

FASTER, WERMIS! THE SLIGHTEST DELAY COULD COST ME WHAT I SEEK!

COME, COME, LORD VADER... BE REASONABLE! MY SHIP IS AT STAKE! WE'RE UTTERLY TORTURING THE WARP DRIVE NOW!

ISN'T IT ENOUGH THAT WE'RE MAKING THIS MAD DASH TO THE WHEEL ON LITTLE MORE THAN A WHIM...? I MEAN--

THE FORCE IS NO WHIM, CAPTAIN WERMIS.

AND IF ON OUR OUTWARD JOURNEY, I MADE PASSING CONTACT WITH ANOTHER MIND SEEMINGLY CAPABLE OF EVOKING IT--*

IT'S WORTH A DOZEN OF THESE VESSELS TO LEARN WHO POSSESSES EVEN A TOUCH OF THIS POWER I THOUGHT WAS NOW MINE ALONE!

*THAT MIND WAS LUKE'S, AS WE KNOW FROM LAST ISSUE AND #18.--ARCHIE.

OF COURSE, YOU CANNOT APPRECIATE THAT POWER... UNTIL YOU EXPERIENCE IT.

V-VADER... NO! I--I--

AIR! I C-CAN'T BREATHE...! I CAN'T--

BUT YOU CAN MOVE, WERMIS. YOU CAN DROP TO YOUR KNEES--

--AND CRAWL. CRAWL TO ME!

WELL DONE, CAPTAIN, YOU LACK THE STAMINA OF A KOBARIAN SWAMP DOG--

--BUT I'M CERTAIN YOU CAN MATCH ITS UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE.

NOW, ON TO THE **WHEEL!** THAT IS THE **DIRECTION** MY PREY HEADED... THAT IS THE FIRST PLACE WE'LL **SEARCH.**

AND WE WON'T RISK **MISSING** HIM BY HOLDING **BACK.** **CORRECT,** CAPTAIN WERMIS?

YOU MEN **HEARD** LORD VADER! **SPEED! MORE SPEED!**

AN INTERLUDE IN HYPER-SPACE **ENDS.** *MEANWHILE, WITHIN SIMON GREYSHADE'S PRIVATE YACHT...*

...NEGOTIATIONS **BEGIN.**

I CAN'T **BELIEVE** THIS! I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE EVEN **DISCUSSING** THIS!

YOU'RE **YOUNG,** SKYWALKER! WHEN YOU'VE HAD **MY** EXPERIENCE, THE ONLY **ASTOUNDING** THING--

--IS HOW VERY **LITTLE** ASTOUNDS YOU!

I DON'T INTEND TO **EVER** BE LIKE YOU, GREYSHADE...NO MATTER **HOW MUCH** EXPERIENCE I GET!

DON'T WASTE YOUR **BREATH** ON THIS SLIME, PRINCESS! WE'LL TAKE OUR CHANCES **FIGHTING!**

WHAT CHANCES, MY FIERY FRIEND? THIS SHIP, THIS DOCKING BAY, IS A **DEAD END--**

--UNLESS YOU ACCEPT MY RATHER GENEROUS **TERMS.**

YOU TRULY **MEAN** IT... **DON'T** YOU? YOU'LL DEFY THE **EMPIRE,** LET THEIR SCHEME BE **EXPOSED,** AND MY FRIENDS GO **FREE...!** ALL IN **RETURN** FOR--

--ME?

MOST MEN ARE ATTRACTED TO WHAT THEY CAN'T **HAVE,** LEIA ORGANA...PARTICULARLY A MAN LIKE **ME** FOR WHOM EVERYTHING ELSE COMES **EASILY.**

UNDER **NORMAL** CIRCUMSTANCES--AS IN OUR SENATE DAYS-- YOU'D NEVER GIVE ME THE **TIME** TO MAKE YOU **LOVE** ME.

I'M MERELY **CREATING** CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE YOU **CAN!**

THIS *SHIP* CAN TAKE US TO PLACES IN THIS GALAXY WHERE THEY'VE NEVER *HEARD* OF THE EMPIRE... *OR* THE REBEL ALLIANCE!

THE *STOLEN TREASURE* JUST LOADED ABOARD WILL ASSURE WE NEVER *WANT* FOR A THING.

IT WILL BE *AWKWARD* AT FIRST...BUT *TIME* WILL CHANGE THAT. TIME...AND YOUR PROMISE: *NO MORE ESCAPES!*

NO!

SHE'S NOT PROMISING *ANYTHING* BECAUSE I'M GETTING HER *OUT* OF HERE... *RIGHT NOW!*

LUKE...! THAT'S *NOT* YOUR DECISION... IT'S *MINE!*

AND IF IT'S NOT MADE *SOON,* PRINCESS--

--*SOME* OF YOUR COMPANIONS MAY NOT BE *ALIVE* TO ENJOY ANY *BENEFIT* FROM IT!

AS COMMUNICATOR SCREENS *ALL OVER* THE WHEEL REFLECT, THE GREAT GLADIATORIAL GAME IS RUNNING ITS *COURSE,* THE NUMBER OF SURVIVORS *DWINDLING...*

...AND EVEN THOUGH HE'S STILL ONE OF THEM, THE SKIPPER OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON FINDS HE CAN'T REJOICE.

NEVER HEARD OF A TIE IN ONE OF THESE GAMES--

IN FACT I'M SURE THE BETTORS WOULDN'T ACCEPT IT--

WHICH MEANS I'D BETTER COME UP WITH SOMETHING BRILLIANT AND FAST!

BECAUSE WITH CHEWIE PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THAT BIG BRUISER BELOW--

--THIS IS ABOUT TO BECOME A THREE-WAY CONTEST!

THIS TYLUUN NIGHT-SOARER HAS REACHED THE SAME CONCLUSION...

...AND WITH THE STEALTH AND CUNNING THAT HAS MADE HIS RACE FAMOUS AS ASSASSINS, HE ELECTS TO HOLD BACK AND LET HIS TWO OPPONENTS COMMIT THEMSELVES.

AND HAN DOES! BY KICKING THE BODY OF HIS RECENTLY SLAIN FOE...

BNUM!

...INTO THE ARENA'S SOLE REMAINING PLANETOID!

FOR SEVERAL INSTANTS, SMOKE, GLARE, AND DEBRIS CLOUD EVERY VIEWSCREEN RECEIVING THE CLOSELY-MONITORED DUEL. THEN, OUT OF THE EXPLOSIVE CONFUSION...

...SWIMS A DETERMINED HAN SOLO, HEADING FOR HIS WOOKIEE FRIEND AND FIRST MATE!

GROWR!

CHEWIE! THIS AIN'T GONNA BE EASY, PAL...BUT THIS IS THE WAY IT'S GOTTA BE!

THERE CAN'T BE TWO WINNERS IN THIS SO-CALLED GAME, OL' BUDDY--

--AND YOU STAND THE BEST CHANCE OF COMIN' OUT ON TOP AGAINST THAT NIGHT-SOARER!

PARTICULARLY SINCE I'VE TAKEN OUT THE LAST DEATH TRAP SO HE CAN'T TRICK YOU INTO IT!

YOU UNDERSTAND, YA BIG FURBALL? THERE'S NO CHOICE!

YOU GOTTA BLAST ME...AND DO IT FAST!

NAWHR!

DAMMIT, CHEWIE... SHOOT!

THEY STARE... LONG-TIME COMPANIONS, INSEPERABLE PARTNERS, SHARING LAST, UNSPOKEN THOUGHTS.

THEN CHEWBACCA DOES WHAT HE HAS TO DO.

VEEDOW!

WITHIN THE LOUNGE OF SENATOR GREYSHADE'S SPACE YACHT... THREE VIEWERS GASP!

HAN...!

LEIA, I-I...

I NEVER ANTIC-IPATED THIS...! I THOUGHT THERE'D STILL BE TIME TO--

DON'T APOLOGIZE, SIMON... YOU'VE WON! I CAN'T WATCH ANYONE ELSE I CARE FOR DESTROYED! NOT AFTER ALDERAAN... NOT AFTER THIS!

YOU'VE WON...! BUT NO ONE EVER GAINED A MORE EMPTY AND BITTER PRIZE!

DON'T MISS NEXT ISSUE!

FLIGHT INTO FURY!

OUR SENSES-SHATTERING CONCLUSION!

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FLIGHT INTO FURY!

THIS IS DOCKING BAY TEN OF THE MAN-MADE MONUMENT TO THE GALAXY'S LOVE OF GAMBLING...**THE WHEEL**. HERE, THE PRIVATE SPACE YACHT OF SIMON GREYSHADE IS BEING READIED FOR **LAUNCH**... OR MORE CORRECTLY, **ESCAPE!**

THAT'S IT...! MAIN REACTOR IS FULLY **PRIMED.**

ALL RIGHT, REBEL! TAKE YOUR **DROID** AND GET **OUT** OF HERE--

--BEFORE I **FORGET** THE ADMINISTRATOR'S **DEAL** WITH THAT PRINCESS YOU FOLLOW AROUND... AND **REMEMBER** THAT YOU BLASTED A COUPLE OF MY FELLOW **SECURITY GUARDS!** *

* A SKIRMISH WITNESSED **LAST ISSUE.**--ARTFUL ARCHIE.

LG357

SHUT UP! I'VE JUST SEEN A GOOD FRIEND DIE! AND I'M ABOUT TO LOSE THE GIRL I--

T-THE GIRL I--

JUST SHUT UP!

THE WHEEL SECURITY GUARD OBEYS.

DESPITE HIS WEAPON, DESPITE HIS TRAINING, THERE IS NO QUESTION IN HIS MIND THAT IT WOULD BE THE GRAVEST OF MISTAKES NOT TO!

AND WHAT HAS PRODUCED SUCH COLD RAGE IN LUKE SKYWALKER? IT STARTED WITH THIS...*

...THE DEATH OF HAN SOLO, BROADCAST LIVE FROM THE WHEEL'S ZERO-GRAVITY GLADIATORIAL ARENA...

...THE SPICE-SMUGGLER'S WOOKIEE FIRST MATE FORCED TO BE HIS EXECUTIONER!

*ALSO LAST ISSUE.--ARCHIE.

WHICH IN TURN BROUGHT A RELUCTANT DECISION FROM PRINCESS/SENATOR LEIA ORGANA...

YOU WIN, SIMON... I CAN'T WATCH ANYONE ELSE I CARE FOR DESTROYED!

KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO EXPOSE THE EMPIRE'S PLAN HERE AND SET LUKE AND THE OTHERS FREE--

I'LL GO WITH YOU... WHEREVER YOU WANT. NO ESCAPE ATTEMPTS.

AND THIS HAS SENT THE YOUNG STARWARRIOR IN MOISTURE FARMER CLOTHING STORMING OUT OF THE SPACE YACHT'S CABIN...

LUKE!

THERE'S STILL TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE. WHATEVER YOU FEEL ABOUT MY DECISION... IT'S TIME WE MAY NEVER HAVE AGAIN.

I-I--

--I GUESS THAT'S WHAT BOTHERS ME MOST.

THE EMBRACE IS CLUMSY, THE KISS AWKWARD. BUT AS HE WATCHES FROM THE YACHT'S HATCHWAY, WHEEL ADMINISTRATOR SIMON GREYSHADE SENSES FEELING AND EMOTION HE CAN NEVER KNOW.

MEANWHILE, IN THE ARENA'S SIMULATED SPACE FIELD, CHEWBACCA STARES LONG AND HARD AT HAN SOLO'S DRIFTING FORM...

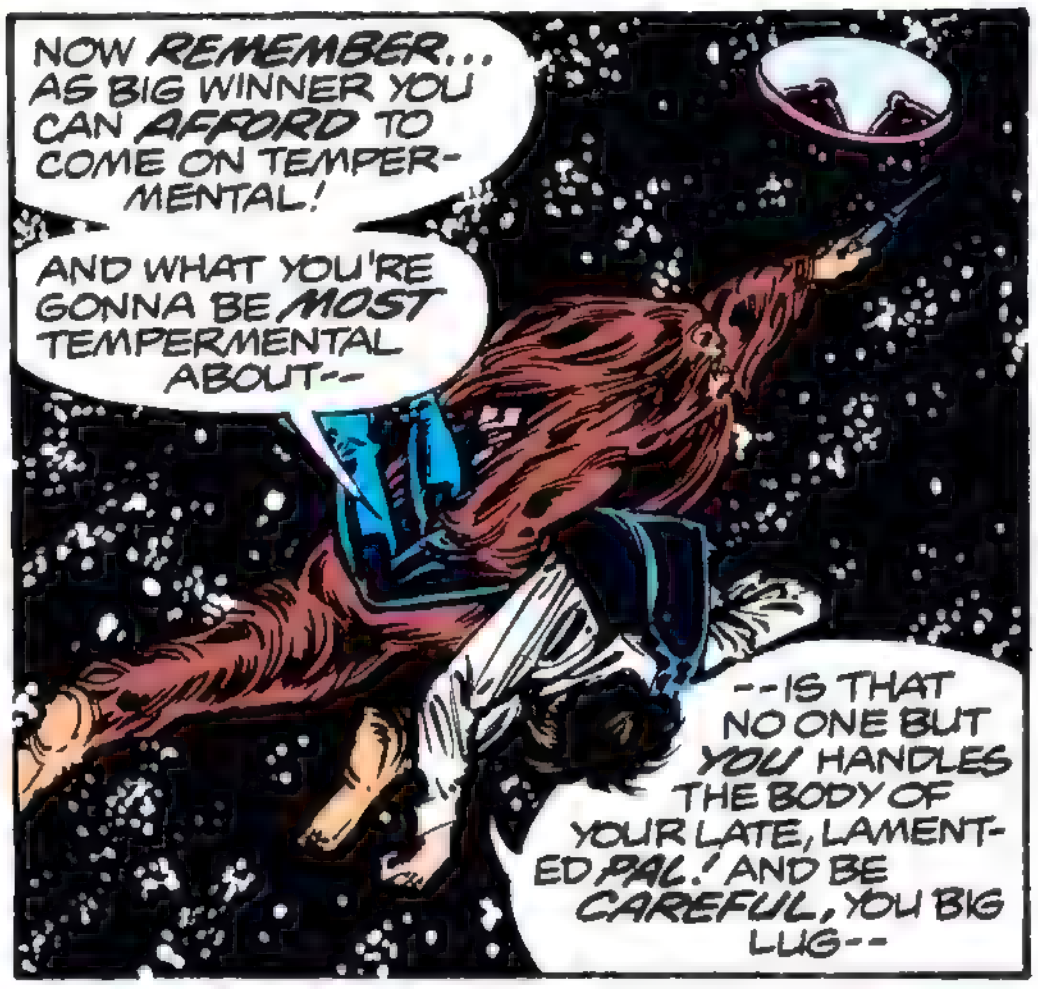
A SMALL SOUND COMES FROM HIS THROAT. IN A HUMAN, IT MIGHT BE SOBBING.

BUT WHILE MORE THAN ONE CONTESTANT SURVIVES... THE ARENA IS NO RESPECTER OF GRIEF!

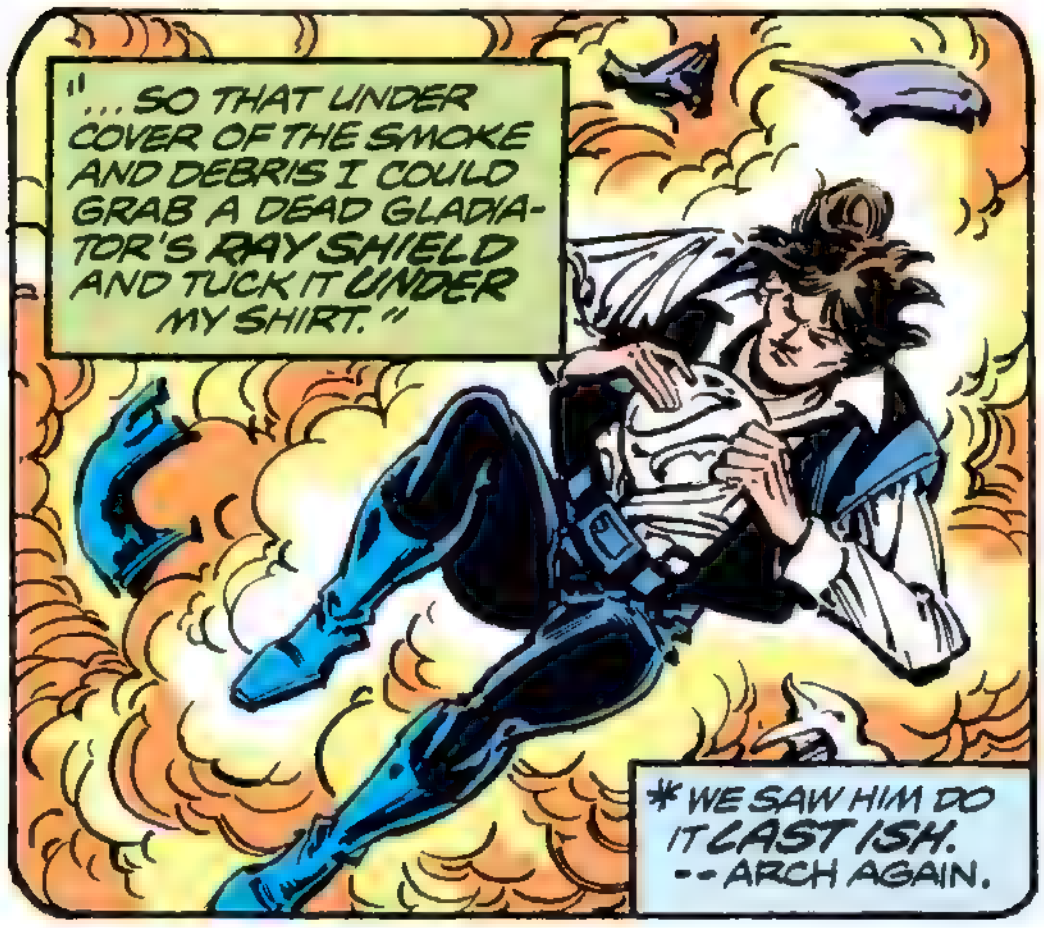
THE TYLUUN NIGHT-SOARER IS PATIENT. HE HOLDS HIS FIRE, RESPECTFUL OF THE WOOKIEE'S GREAT STRENGTH, WAITING UNTIL HE'S CLOSE ENOUGH FOR A CERTAIN KILL.

STILL, HE CAN ALMOST TASTE VICTORY... CHAMPIONSHIP IN THE WHEEL'S BIG GAME! JUST A LITTLE CLOSER...

RARRK!


NOW REMEMBER... AS BIG WINNER YOU CAN AFFORD TO COME ON TEMPERMENTAL!
AND WHAT YOU'RE GONNA BE MOST TEMPERMENTAL ABOUT--
--IS THAT NO ONE BUT YOU HANDLES THE BODY OF YOUR LATE, LAMENTED PAL! AND BE CAREFUL, YOU BIG LUG--

"I WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE EXPLODING ONE OF THE ARENA'S DEATH TRAPS...*


"...SO THAT UNDER COVER OF THE SMOKE AND DEBRIS I COULD GRAB A DEAD GLADIATOR'S RAY SHIELD AND TUCK IT UNDER MY SHIRT."
*WE SAW HIM DO IT LAST ISH. --ARCH AGAIN.

IF YOU ACCIDENTLY SHAKE IT OUT NOW... EVERYONE'S GONNA KNOW THAT GOT BLASTED INSTEAD OF MY TENDER FLESH!
SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK THEY'LL BE AMUSED!

FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, AMUSEMENT RUNS HIGH ON THE WHEEL. THE WOOKIEE WAS A FAVORITE. COMPUTER PAY LINES ARE LONG.

BUT AS EXCITED GAMBLERS WAIT IN THE GRAND CASINO...

STOP! THERE'S A REBEL PLOT UNDERWAY!

IT'S S-STROM... THE IMPERIAL COMMANDER FOR THIS GALACTIC SECTOR! HE LOOKS... DRUNK!

I'VE BEEN DRUGGED, YOU FOOLS! IT'S THE WORK OF THE WHEEL ADMINSTRATOR!

ROYAL LOUNGE

HE'S PART OF THE PLOT!

I DECLARE THIS SPACE STATION TO BE UNDER MARTIAL LAW!

ALL IMPERIAL PERSONNEL ON LEAVE HERE REPORT TO ME AT ONCE!

NO ONE ELSE WILL BE PERMITTED TO DEPART THE WHEEL UNTIL ORDER IS RESTORED!

DESPITE THROBBING HEAD AND CHURNING STOMACH, STROM SMILES INWARDLY...

...YEARS OF IMMUNITY PROGRAMMING HAVE ENABLED HIM TO FIGHT OFF A SLEEP DRUG MEANT TO HOLD HIM FOR HOURS.

WHATEVER MY DOUBLE-CROSSING EX-PARTNER'S BEEN UP TO... HE'S COUNTING ON MORE TIME THAN HE NOW HAS!

WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS, SIR?

FIND ADMINISTRATOR GREYSHADE AND THOSE REBELS FROM THE MILLENNIUM FALCON WHO SOUGHT REFUGE ON THE WHEEL--

KILL THEM ALL ON SIGHT!

THIS IS *TERRIBLE*... THE EMPIRE HAS NEVER BEEN ALLOWED TO *INTERFERE* ON THE WHEEL BEFORE!

I DON'T LIKE GAMBLING WITH A *STORM TROOPER* LOOKING OVER *MY* SHOULDER EITHER--

BUT IF IT KEEPS US SAFE FROM *REBEL ATTACKS* SUCH AS WE'VE SEEN RECENTLY*... THEN I'LL *ACCEPT* IT!

*STAR WARS #20.--ARCH.

AND THE MURMURS OF AGREEMENT THAT SWEEP THROUGH THE CASINO CUSTOMERS ARE LIKE BALM TO THE COMMANDER'S DRUG-WRACKED BODY.

OUR *FAKE ATTACKS* HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL! I'M A *CERTAINTY* FOR THE EMPEROR'S *COMMENDATION LIST*--

--ONCE GREYSHADE AND THOSE REBELS ARE *PERMANENTLY SILENCED!*

THE STEPS FOR THAT SILENCING ARE TAKEN IN LEAPING STRIDES. SOON, IN DOCKING BAY TEN...

SENATOR GREYSHADE, MASTER-COM... OPEN THE *MAGNETIC FIELD* HERE. WE'RE TAKING OUT MY *YACHT.*

I ALSO AUTHORIZE DEPARTURE FOR THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON*--

--A YOUNG MAN NAMED *SKYWALKER* IS ON HIS WAY TO *READY* IT FOR HIS COMPANIONS.

ALSO: HIDING *SOMEWHERE* IN THIS AREA IS AN *R2-D2 UNIT.* FIND IT, MASTER-COM... AND *BROADCAST* ON ALL CHANNELS THE *TAPE* IT CARRIES! THAT--

I MAY HAVE A *PROBLEM* WITH THOSE *ORDERS,* SENATOR--

--YOUR AUTHORITY AS ADMINISTRATOR APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN *RESCINDED.*

AS THE WHEEL'S *MASTER-COMPUTER,* I AM OBLIGED TO OBEY THE *NEW* AUTHORITIES.

AS ONE WHO FEELS *FRIENDSHIP* FOR THE MAN WHO GAVE HIM *HUMANOID FORM*--

--I WILL ATTEMPT TO AT LEAST *OPEN* YOUR DOCKING BAY'S MAGNETIC FIELD BEFORE--

BLOW IT AWAY! THE STUPID COMPUTER'S GONE CRAZY!

OBSCENE...! A MACHINE BELIEVING IT FELT FRIENDSHIP FOR AN ORGANIC!

AT LEAST WE CUT IT DOWN BEFORE IT COULD AID THAT TRAITOR, GREYSHADE.

WEEDOO! FLOW!

REPORT THIS TO COMMANDER STROM! HE'LL WANT A COMPUTER-OVERRIDE TEAM TO TAKEOVER ALL WHEEL FUNCTIONS.

I'LL HAVE A SEARCH-AND-DESTROY SQUAD PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO DOCKING BAY TEN!

PROCEED IT DOES... AND ALONG THE SAME CORRIDOR AS LUKE AND SEE THREEPIO!

STORM TROOPERS!

BACK TO THE BAY...! IF GREY-SHADE HASN'T GOTTEN LEIA AWAY YET... THEY'RE GOING TO NEED HELP!

OH, DEAR! NOT ANOTHER BATTLE! I DON'T BELIEVE MY PERCEPTORY CIRCUITS ARE UP TO IT...!

AND THE THOUGHT OF POOR ARTOO DEETOO... LOST IN THIS MADNESS!

BUT SO FAR, THAT PARTICULAR LITTLE DROID IS IN BETTER SHAPE THAN HIS COMPANIONS...

HAVING FOUND REFUGE IN A CIRCUITRY CONDUIT, HE NOW PROCEEDS ALONG IT...

VRR-KLK!

BIIP!

...NEATLY BYPASSING INCREASED STORM TROOPER ACTIVITY IN THE CORRIDORS PARALLEL TO HIM.

THE TAPE HE CARRIES CAN EXPOSE THE EMPIRE'S DECEPTION. HIS INTEGRATED LOGIC TERMINALS HAVE REASONED WHAT HE MUST DO WITH IT. BUT THAT INVOLVES LEAVING THE CONDUIT...

PH-OOOP!

...AND AT THE POINT WHERE HE DOES, SOMEONE IS WAITING!

MEANWHILE, THE WILD SWIRL OF EVENTS ON THE WHEEL REACHES OUT EVEN FURTHER...

...TO TOUCH A BEREAVED CHAMPION BENT ON CONDUCTING A FALLEN COMRADE TO THEIR SHIP AND EVENTUAL BURIAL IN SPACE. AT LEAST, THAT'S THEIR STORY. BUT...

BORRK!

FORGET TAKING THIS LIFT TO THE DOCKING BAYS, WOOKIEE--

THERE'S AN IMPERIAL DEATH WARRANT ON YOU... SERVABLE RIGHT NOW!

COME ON, GUYS...! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO RESPECT FOR THE DEAD?!

ZOOW!

ANOTHER BUNCH COMIN'! NEED MORE FIREPOWER THAN THIS PISTOL I SWIPED FROM THAT UN-OBSERVANT GLADIATOR PIT GUARD--

GRAB THOSE TROOPERS' WEAPONS, CHEWIE... IT'S LAST STAND TIME!

A SENTIMENT SHARED IN DOCKING BAY TEN...

I'VE SEALED THE CORRIDOR ENTRANCE, GREYSHADE...BUT THAT WON'T KEEP THE IMPERIALS OUT FOR LONG.

IF ONLY THOSE GUARDS OF YOURS HADN'T FLED--!

BRIBED LOYALTY HAS ITS LIMITS, SKYWALKER--

--PARTICULARLY THE PROSPECT OF NOT BEING ALIVE TO SPEND THE BRIBE! I'M AMAZED I'M STILL HERE. MY INFATUATION FOR THE PRINCESS IS MORE FATAL THAN I EVER SUSP--

LUKE! WHAT IS IT--?!

N-NO...! NOT HIM...! NOT NOW...!

AND AT THIS EXACT INSTANT, ON THE EDGE OF THE STAR SYSTEM WHERE THE WHEEL TURNS...

...ONE OF THE EMPIRE'S MIGHTY BATTLE CRUISERS DROPS OUT OF HYPER-SPACE.

WE'RE HERE, SIR! AND GETTING LASER TRANSMISSIONS OF TURMOIL ON THE WHEEL! COMMANDER STROM'S TROOPS HAVE REBELS TRAPPED THERE AND--

AND ONE OF THEM IS WHOM I SEEK! EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE I CAN FEEL IT.

I'LL TRANSMIT THAT YOU'RE HERE TO TAKE CHARGE AND WILL BE ABOARD BY--

NO. PROCEED SLOWLY, BUT MONITORING EVERY INCH OF THAT STATION, CAPTAIN WERMIS.

THOUGH THE POWER SEEMS MOSTLY LATENT... THE FORCE IS WITH OUR PREY. SUCH A PERSON MIGHT WELL ELUDE STROM AND TAKE FLIGHT FROM THE WHEEL--

--BUT I SHALL BE WAITING FOR THEM!

I'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR YOU, ARTOO-DEETOO. JUST BEFORE THE STORM TROOPERS DESTROYED MY *OTHER* BODY AND I SECRETLY *SWITCHED* MY FUNCTIONS TO THIS *SPARE*--*

--MY SENSORS *DETECTED* YOU MOVING IN THE CONDUIT.

YOUR DESTINATION IS JUST DOWN THE CORRIDOR... *A MASTER RELAY TERMINAL.*

YA-DEEP?

*WE SAW *MASTER-COM* DO THIS BEFORE IN SW#14.--ARCHIE.

YES, I CAN *HELP* YOU. HAD THE IMPERIALS SIMPLY *ORDERED* ME TO SHUT DOWN... I'D HAVE HAD TO *OBEY.* BUT I ANGERED THEM INTO USING *VIOLENCE*... WHICH MY PROGRAMMING ALLOWS ME TO *RESIST.*

BUT WE MUST *HURRY.* A HUMAN *OVERRIDE TEAM* IS WORKING TO DISCONNECT ALL MY CONTACTS WITH *WHEEL FUNCTIONS.* I'M *FIGHTING* THEM--

--BUT TO RECAPTURE THE SYSTEMS I NEED TO AID *YOUR* MASTERS AND *MINE*... I NEED A *DIVERSION.*

BROADCASTING THE *TAPE* YOU HAVE SHOULD BE AN *EXCELLENT* ONE.

JUST PLUG IN *HERE.*

DA-WEE-T!

*AND THE **RESULTS** OF THAT PLUGGING IN ARE INSTANTLY FELT THROUGHOUT THE WHEEL. EVERY COMMUNICATOR SCREEN IN EVERY CASINO FLASHES THE SIGHT AND SOUND OF **TREACHERY.***

WHAT IN THE *GALAXY--?!* WHEEL GUARDS RAIDING THE *IMPERIAL COMMANDER'S* SHIP?!

BUT LISTEN TO WHAT THEY'RE *SAYING*... LOOK AT THOSE *STRONG BOXES!*

IT'S THE *WHEEL PROFITS* STROM REPORTED THAT THE REBELS PIRATED!

THE *EMPIRE'S* BEEN MAKING THOSE ATTACKS AND *CLAIMING* IT WAS THE ALLIANCE!

*END RESULT: **RESENTMENT,** WHICH BUBBLES INTO RAGE, WHICH EXPLODES INTO...*

...RIOT!

*ON THEIR HOMEWORLDS, THEY WOULDN'T **DARE** THIS. BUT THE WHEEL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A **SANCTUARY**...*

...A **SAFETY VALVE** FOR AN OPPRESSED GALAXY TO LET OFF **STEAM**. TO FIND IT VIOLATED AND TAMPERED WITH SENDS ITS THOUSANDS OF FRUSTRATED PLEASURE AND THRILL SEEKERS WILDLY **RAMPAGING!**

IN THE RAMPAGE... A LOT OF **STORM TROOPERS** ARE TAKEN OUT OF HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA'S **HAIR!**

LET THAT BE A **LESSON**, BIG BUDDY. NEVER LET A **GAMBLER** FIND OUT THE GAME'S BEEN **RIGGED!**

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OUR DOCKING BAY'S JUST **AHEAD**--

WE'LL GET THESE **STRONG-BOXES** WITH ALL THE GLADIATORIAL GAME **WINNINGS** ABOARD THE **FALCON**, THEN FIGURE A WAY TO HELP **LUKE**, HER **ROYALNESS**, AND THE--

ROWR!

AN **IMPERIAL WELCOMING COMMITTEE!** THOSE GUYS ARE PERSISTENT AS TATOOINE **SAND LICE!**

NAARRGH!

WATTA YOU MEAN, **YOU** KNOW WHAT TO DO?! SO DO **I**... GET THE BLAZES **OUT** OF HERE!

BUT CHEWIE'S COURSE OF ACTION IS SOMEWHAT **DIFFERENT**. HE JAMS THE CARGO FLOATER'S DRIVE SWITCH TO **FULL POWER** AND...

...PUSHES HAN AND HIMSELF **OFF** AS IT CAREENS **FORWARD!**

CHEWIE! YOU LEFT OUR **WINNINGS** ABOARD!

AND BAD AS THEY MAY SEEM... THINGS ARE MUCH WORSE ELSEWHERE!

BAWOOM!

THAT'S IT...! THE STORM TROOPERS HAVE BLOWN THE DOOR.

IF THAT STIRRING I FELT EARLIER IN THE FORCE--

--REALLY WAS DARTH VADER APPROACHING... HE'S GONNA HAVE TO WAIT IN LINE!

LUKE! GREYSHADE! THREEPIO SAYS MASTER-COM IS ON THE YACHT'S COMMUNICATOR--

--HE'S GAINED TEMPORARY CONTROL OF THE MAGNETIC FIELD SYSTEM. HE CAN OPEN IT... BUT NOT FOR LONG!

THEN YOU AND THE SENATOR TAKE OFF--

WITHOUT COVERING FIRE, SOME STORM TROOPER IS SURE TO PUT A PROTON GRENADE DOWN THE YACHT'S AFTER-BURNER.

SKYWALKER, HOW CAN I EVER WIN OVER THE PRINCESS WITH THE LIKES OF YOU AND SOLO CONSTANTLY THROWING AWAY YOUR LIVES FOR HER?

GET ABOARD...! RATHER THAN COMPETE WITH SUCH DISGUSTING NOBILITY... I'LL STAY BEHIND!

BESIDES, I'VE GAINED SOMETHING FROM ALL THIS FOOLISHNESS THAT AN UNSCRUPULOUS MAN LIKE ME NORMALLY NEVER HAS--

--A FRIEND: MASTER-COM!

HEAR THAT, ARTOO DEETOO? NOW WE BOTH HAVE HUMAN FRIENDS!

OA-TOOT!

YES. THIS IS AN ESCAPE POD HATCH--

--BEFORE I TRY TO JOIN MY FRIEND... YOU SHOULD HAVE A CHANCE AT REJOINING YOURS!

KAWOOM!

THUS, THE POD'S RELEASE IS TIMED TO MATCH...

...THE DEPARTURE OF THE SPACE YACHT FROM BAY TEN!

LUKE...WE'RE CLEAR! GREYSHADE HELD OFF THE STORM TROOPERS!

WE COULDN'T HAVE MADE IT IF HE HADN'T PRINCESS--

--BUT I'D BE MORE IMPRESSED IF HIS CHANGE OF HEART HAD COME IN TIME TO SAVE HAN!

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, SIR... BUT MASTER-COM'S MAKING A LAST COMMUNICATION. HE REPORTS THERE'S REASON TO BELIEVE CAPTAIN SOLO IS STILL ALIVE--

AND ALSO THAT WE HAVE A MOST IMPORTANT PICK UP TO MAKE!

THERE ARE SUDDENLY CHEERS ABOARD THE SLEEK YACHT. BUT BACK IN ITS DOCKING BAY...

...THERE IS SMOKE AND THE STENCH OF DEATH.

SENATOR...? SENATOR GREYSHADE...!

OVER HERE, MASTER-COM... MORE OR LESS ALIVE. I SEEM TO HAVE HAD BEGINNER'S LUCK PLAYING HERO--

--AIDED BY AN ILL-TIMED STORMTROOPER CHARGE JUST AS THE YACHT'S ENGINES IGNITED!

IT'S THE LAST OF YOUR GOOD FORTUNE, GREYSHADE!

I HAD TO FIGHT CLEAR OF A MOB TO FIND YOU... BUT NOW, I'LL SEE YOU DEAD!

WELL, I CAN'T SAY YOU DON'T HAVE REASON TO FEEL THAT WAY, STROM.

IT'S A BIT UNSPORTING SINCE I'VE EMPTIED AND DISCARDED MY BLASTER--

--BUT NO DOUBT YOU FEEL THE SAME ABOUT THIS *PROTON GRENADE* I'VE BEEN HOLDING AS A *LAST RESORT!*

SENATOR! THOSE AREN'T MEANT--

FTOOM!

--FOR *CLOSE RANGE!*

SORRY, MASTER-COM. I'M AFRAID I COME TO THIS BUSINESS A BIT *LATE.*

YOU'RE LEAKING *OIL.*

AND YOU *BLOOD,* SIR. I DOUBT EITHER OF US CAN *AFFORD* IT, HOPEFULLY, WE'RE NOT BEYOND *REPAIR--*

HOPEFULLY. BUT IF ONE *MUST* DIE... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE THE COMPANY OF A *FRIEND.*

SMOKE CLOSES IN ON THE TWO FIGURES, *OBSCURING* THEM...

...AND A LONG *QUIET,* THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE, SETTLES OVER THE ENTIRE WHEEL. BUT IN *SPACE,* AS ONE ORDEAL *ENDS* WITH THE RECOVERY OF ARTOO DEETOO'S ESCAPE POD..

...A NEW ONE SWIFTLY AND AWESOMELY *BEGINS!*

AN *IMPERIAL CRUISER....!* THEY MUST HAVE SHUT DOWN ALL *SYSTEMS* AND COASTED IN WHILE WE WERE TAKING ON THE *POD!*

THE *BAY'S* OPENING! *LUKE!* WE'VE GOT TO EVADE ITS *TRACTOR BEAM!*

BUT LUKE HAS MORE TO EVADE... HE FEELS A SINISTER SHIFTING IN THE FORCE AND REALIZES ALL TOO WELL...

...ANOTHER MIND SEARCHES FOR HIS!

OUR PREY IS ON THE YACHT, WERMIS... I'M CERTAIN OF IT!

BUT WHOEVER IT IS HAS GOTTEN PAST THE FRIGHT FELT THE FIRST TIME OUR ASPECTS BRUSHED--*

--NOW THEY UNCONSCIOUSLY RESIST... CLOUD MY EFFORTS! I NEED A FACE-TO-FACE CONFRONTATION, WERMIS--

--DON'T FUMBLE THE OPPORTUNITY!

NOT TO WORRY, LORD VADER! NO EVASIVE ACTION CAN SAVE THEM NO--

* WAY BACK IN SW#18. --ARCH.

BRA-KOW!

SCORE ONE FOR JUSTICE, CHEWIE--!!

AN' FOR SHAKIN' THE PANTS OFF ANYONE ON THAT CRUISER BRIDGE TRYIN' TO OPERATE A TRACTOR BEAM!

MOVE IT, KIDS... WHILE THE EMPIRE IS STILL GETTING OVER THE SHOCK!

HAN! YOU ARE ALIVE... AND AWAY FROM THE WHEEL!

IT'S A MIRACLE!

NOT AT ALL, YOUR WORSHIP. JUST ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF TYPICAL SOLO DARING--

--MARRED SOMEWHAT BY CHEWIE DEVISING THE MOST EX-PENSIVE ESCAPE KNOWN TO SENTIENT LIFE!

RARGH!

THAT'S RIGHT, I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU FORGET WHAT YOU DID WITH OUR WINNINGS.

NOW YOU AND THE GANG CLEAR OUT, PRINCESS--

WE'LL MAKE ONE MORE PASS AT THE BAD GUYS TO COVER FOR YOU!

AFTER BEING TORN APART * AN' THROWN BACK TOGETHER BY WHEEL TECHNOS... THE FALCON NEEDS A GOOD SHAKE-DOWN ANYWAY!

* STAR WARS #19. --ARCH AGAIN.

BUT WITH THIS ACTION, THE CORELLIAN SKIPPER MAY HAVE PRESSED HIS SPACEMAN'S LUCK...

I KNOW THIS VESSEL, WERMIS! THE SMUGGLING SHIP THAT BLASTED MY TIE FIGHTER AND ENDED MY DEFENSE OF THE DEATH STAR!

FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE! WE'RE GOING TO DESTROY THAT SHIP AT ANY COST!

LUKE! THE CRUISER'S ABANDONED US COMPLETELY! B-BUT... IT'S STAYED WITH THE FALCON THROUGH ITS PASS!

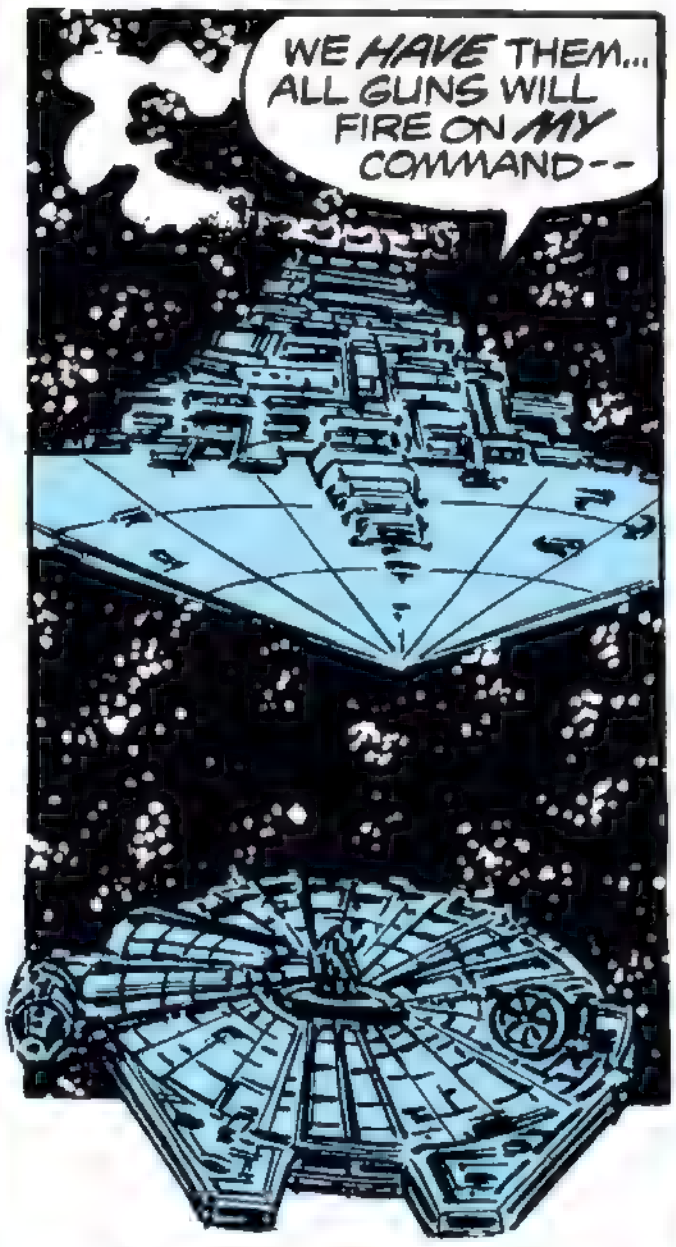
HAN AND CHEWBACCA WILL BE VAPORIZED BEFORE THEY CAN REACH LIGHT SPEED...!

FOR A MOMENT, LUKE DOESN'T SPEAK. THE FORCE FILLS HIS THOUGHTS...

...THEN, HE **CRIES OUT** IN RAGE AND FRUSTRATION!

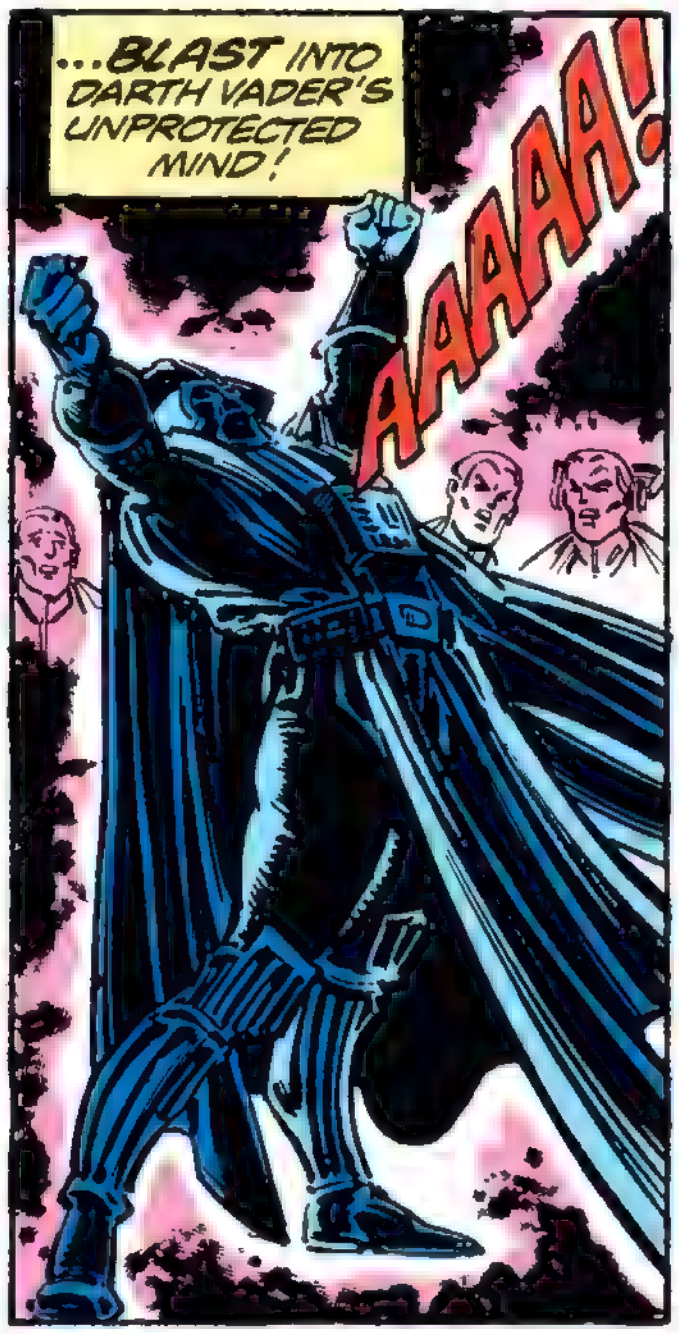
RAGE... AT REGAINING A FRIEND THOUGHT **DEAD**, ONLY TO SEE HIM ABOUT TO BE **SLAIN** AGAIN.
FRUSTRATION... AT HAVING A VAST POWER AND NOT KNOWING HOW TO **SAVE** HAN WITH IT!

BUT CHANNELS HAVE BEEN OPENED HERE, OPENED BY A **DARK LORD**, PROBING WITH THE FORCE...



...**OPENED**, BUT FORGOTTEN IN THE THOUGHT OF **VENGEANCE** FOR HIS ONE GREAT **DEFEAT**...

...UNTIL **ALL** OF LUKE'S RAGING FEELINGS, LIKE **LIGHTNING** CARRIED ALONG A WIRE FROM **ONE** PLACE IT HAS STRUCK TO **ANOTHER**...



THE **PAIN** IS BRIEF...BUT **INTENSE**. YET IN THE MOMENT OF ITS **PASSING** AND HIS **RECOVERY**...

...THE LORD OF THE SITH FINDS **TWO** SETS OF PREY HAVE MADE THE JUMP INTO **HYPER-SPACE**.
HE STILL DOESN'T KNOW THEIR **IDENTITIES**. THEY'VE **ELUDED** HIM...
...BUT ONLY FOR **NOW**.

LUKE...? **LUKE**...? ARE YOU **ALL RIGHT**? WHAT **HAPPENED**?
BEN KENOBI ONCE SAID THE FORCE WOULD BE **WITH** ME... **ALWAYS**.
IT PROVED IT WAS TODAY... BUT I'VE GOT TO WORK AT **MASTERING** IT. BECAUSE WHERE **DARTH VADER'S** CONCERNED--
--IT MAY NOT BE **ENOUGH** TOMORROW!

NEXT ISSUE: AN UNTOLD TALE OF OBI-WAN KENOBI--IN THE DAYS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC!

SILENT DRIFTING!

40¢ CC

24 JUNE 02817

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INFANTINO/ WACKER...

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MARY JO DUFFY SCRIPT / CARMINE INFANTINO & BOB WIACEK • ART / R. PARKER LETTERS / P. GOLDBERG COLORS / A. GOODWIN EDITOR / JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Silent Drifting

DROPPING OUT OF HYPERSPACE TO MAKE MINOR REPAIRS...* THE MILLENIUM FALCON HAS RUN RIGHT INTO TROUBLE!

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THESE TWO TIE FIGHTERS CAME FROM, BUT WE HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH TIME TO RE-ENTER HYPERSPACE BEFORE ONE OF THEM NAILS US!

CAN'T YOU AT LEAST JAM THEIR TRANS-MISSIONS BEFORE THEY NOTIFY THEIR BASE OF OUR WHEREABOUTS?

AND LET THEM KNOW FOR SURE THAT SOMETHING'S WRONG? RIGHT NOW, THEY PROBABLY FIGURE WE'RE ORDINARY SPACE PIRATES...

IF WE MAKE THEM SUSPICIOUS, THEY MAY HEAD IN TWO SEPARATE DIRECTIONS. WE'D NEVER GET BOTH OF THEM BEFORE THEY CONTACTED THE EMPIRE!

* NOTE -- THIS STORY TAKES PLACE AFTER THE EVENTS IN STAR WARS #15 --Archie.

WONDERFUL.

BADEEP

GRROWR

HAN, DON'T YOU HAVE *ANY* IDEAS AT ALL?

JUST ONE, KID-- LET'S GET *THEM* BEFORE THEY GET *US!*

COMMANDER, I THINK I'VE DETECTED A *WEAKNESS* IN THE FREIGHTER'S *SHIELDS.*

GOOD. CONCENTRATE YOUR *FIRE* ON IT.

HAN!

FRASP

A DIRECT HIT!

FOR LONG SECONDS, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON HANGS MOTIONLESS IN SPACE...

SHE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN A MORTAL HIT, SIR. I'M NOT PICKING UP A SIGNAL FROM ANY OF HER SYSTEMS.

GOOD. LET'S MOVE IN FOR A CLOSER LOOK.

THE TWO IMPERIAL SHIPS CIRCLE THE WOUNDED FREIGHTER LIKE VULTURES...

UNTIL...

VORSH

WE GOT 'EM BOTH!

GREAT SHOOTING, KID. THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT 'EM!

BROOOM

HRONK

LURING THEM IN THAT WAY WAS A *GREAT* IDEA, HAN!

YEAH...THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE IN THE CARGO HOLD IS ONE OF THOSE *MODIFICATIONS* I MADE FOR EMERGENCIES.

OF COURSE, HAVING CHEWIE OPEN THAT NICE, TEMPTING *HOLE* IN OUR SHIELDS FOR 'EM *HELPED*.

CHEWIE, CALCULATE THE JUMP TO HYPERSPACE WHILE I CHECK FOR *DAMAGE*, THEN GET ON TO THOSE *REPAIRS*.

LUKE'S RIGHT, HAN. THAT WAS A *MASTERSTROKE*

VERY CIVIL OF YOU TO *ADMIT* IT, YOUR WORSHIPFULNESS.

OF COURSE, HAN DIDN'T *INVENT* THAT TRICK. THE JEDI KNIGHTS USED IT FOR CENTURIES...

...AND I KNOW OF AN OCCASION WHEN *BEN KENOBI* USED ONE VERY *SIMILAR* TO IT.

BEN?

YES, IT'S A STORY MY *FATHER* TOLD ME, OF SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO BEN *YEARS* AGO--

--BACK IN THE DAYS OF THE OLD *REPUBLIC*...

"... BEFORE THE EMPIRE, WHEN SPACE WAS **FREE** TO ANY SHIPS THAT PASSED BY, SO LONG AS THEY TRAVELLED THROUGH **CIVILIZED** SYSTEMS.

"HUGE **PLEASURE CRUISERS** MOVED ACROSS THE GALAXY THEN, STOCKED WITH EVERY IMAGINABLE LUXURY...

"DOZENS OF RACES MINGLED THERE TOGETHER, REPRESENTING EVERY STRATA OF THEIR SOCIETIES...

"... THEIR EVERY EXTRAVAGANT PLEASURE OR **VICE** CATERED TO...

"... BY CREWS WHOSE ONLY **CONCERN** WAS TO CONVEY ALL OF THEIR GUESTS ACROSS THE SYSTEMS IN **COMFORT**...

"... FROM SENATORS AND PLANETARY LEADERS...

"... TO A **CRIMINAL**, BARELY ESCAPING PLANETARY JUSTICE WITH HIS LIFE AND WEALTH...

"... TO A **JEDI** KNIGHT, RIDING THE SHIP ONLY BECAUSE IT HAPPENED TO BE GOING TOWARD HIS DESTINATION."

GENERAL OBI-WAN KENOBI?

I AM 68-RKO... ON MY WAY TO ENTER SERVICE WITH PRINCE BAIL ORGANA.

YES?

I AM SORRY TO IMPOSE ON YOU, SIR, BUT MOST PEOPLE DON'T LIKE IT WHEN MECHANICALS TRAVEL ALONE... THEY DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO TREAT US AS PASSENGERS OR LUGGAGE.

CAPTAIN QUASAR FELT THAT SINCE YOU WERE TRAVELLING TO ALDERAAN SO CHEAPLY--

--YOU MIGHT CONSENT TO ACT AS MY OWNER.

I'VE NEVER OWNED A LIVING CREATURE IN MY LIFE, AND I DON'T INTEND TO START NOW, BUT IF IT'S A TRAVELLING COMPANION YOU WANT, YOU'RE WELCOME TO SHARE MY CABIN.

HEY! WHAT'S THAT THING DOING IN HERE?

WHY DON'T YOU GO BELOW DECK WHERE YOU BELONG?

THIS JEDI MAY BE A LOUSY DROID-LOVER, BUT THE REST OF US DON'T WANT YOUR KIND MIXING WITH PEOPLE!

IF YOU'RE THAT PARTICULAR ABOUT THE COMPANY YOU KEEP..

...I RECOMMEND THAT IN THE FUTURE, YOU MAKE YOUR TRIPS ALONE.

:ACK=

:OOMPH=

SKAM

TELL CAPTAIN QUASAR TO ADD ANY *DAMAGE COSTS* TO MY FARE.

LAUGHING! THAT JEDI WAS *LAUGHING* AT ME, BUT HE'LL PAY FOR IT.

GENERAL--!

IN THE FUTURE, I SUGGEST YOU SERVE THAT GENTLEMAN A LITTLE *LESS* OF WHATEVER HE'S BEEN *DRINK-ING* TONIGHT.

"FASTER THAN THOUGHT, BEN **REACTED**, HIS HAND FLYING TO THE HILT OF HIS **LIGHT SABRE** AND PRESSING THE ACTIVATING STUD.

=AAGH=

VORP

HE LEAPED RIGHT ONTO THE BLADE. I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D *SEEN* HIM.

I HADN'T.

VERY IMPRESSIVE, GENERAL SIT DOWN, AND I'LL BUY YOU A DRINK.

CARE FOR SOME DELTRON SPICE WINE? THIS LITTLE GADGET FERMENTS IT BY MICROWAVES AND SERVES IT UP SEASONED TO ANY TASTE.

AND NOW IT'S *MY* TURN TO BE IMPRESSED? I'M AFRAID I DON'T CARE FOR *ADDICTIVE* STIMULANTS, MR. --?

TING

TRYLL... AUGUSTUS TRYLL.

AH, YES, MR. TRYLL. I *HAVE* HEARD OF YOU.

GOOD. THAT WILL SAVE ME NEEDLESS EXPLANATIONS. YOU SEE, I'M ABOUT TO ENTER INTO A VENTURE THAT CALLS FOR SOMEONE OF RATHER... *UNUSUAL* TALENTS. INTERESTED IN A *PARTNERSHIP?*

WITH A MAN WHO TRAFFICS IN STOLEN GOODS, POLITICAL BETRAYALS, AND SLAVERY?

I'M AFRAID I HAVE AS LITTLE TASTE FOR YOUR *BUSINESS* AS FOR YOUR *BEVERAGES.*

RKO, IF YOU'D CARE TO JOIN ME, I CAN SHOW YOU WHERE OUR QUARTERS ARE LOCATED.

THANK YOU, GENERAL.

ATTENTION, ALL PASSENGERS, WE ARE NOW LEAVING HYPERSPACE...

...AND PREPARING TO ENTER THE *MERSON* ASTEROID BELT. ALL SYSTEMS NOT RELATING TO LIFE SUPPORT ARE BEING SHUT DOWN.

WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, PLEASE *DEACTIVATE* ANY PRIVATELY OWNED MACHINES AND CONSOLES.

THE MERSONS ARE *HOSTILE* TO THE REPUBLIC, SIR, ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SHIPS THAT STRAY INTO THEIR SECTOR.

SINCE THE ASTEROID BELT MAKES HYPERSPACE PASSAGE IMPOSSIBLE, ANY CRAFT THAT PASSES THIS WAY SHUTS DOWN ITS NONESSENTIAL SYSTEMS AND *DRIFTS* ALONG WITH THE BELT, DISGUISED AS SPACE DEBRIS. IT'S ALL PERFECTLY SAFE.

GOOD, GOOD... BUT TELL ME ABOUT *BAIL*... HOW IS MY OLD FRIEND?

*"THE CONVERSATION WENT ON FOR HOURS, UNTIL **LATER** THAT EVENING, WHEN THEY HEARD A KNOCK AT THE DOOR OF THEIR CABIN..."*

YES? CREWMAN RORK, ISN'T IT?

CAPTAIN QUASAR'S *COMPLIMENTS*, GENERAL. HE REQUESTS THAT YOU COME TO THE BRIDGE.

OF COURSE... YOU DON'T MIND IF MY CABIN-MATE JOINS US?

NOT AT ALL, SIR.

I ASSUME THE CAPTAIN HAS MORE IN MIND THAN A *SOCIAL* VISIT.

I'M NOT AT LIBERTY TO *DISCUSS* THAT, SIR.

SORRY I HAD TO *SEND* FOR YOU LIKE THAT, OBI-WAN, BUT WE CAN'T RISK USING THE INTERCOM, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE THE BRIDGE.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?

SEE FOR YOURSELF. THOSE ARE *MERSON* SHIPS OUT THERE. WE DON'T KNOW IF THEY'VE ACTUALLY *SPOTTED* US, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAS EVER HAPPENED.

I UNDER-STAND YOUR CONCERN.

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO?

EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE *BEEN* DOING. WAIT AND SEE IF THEY TAKE ANY *HOSTILE* ACTION.

" 'AND WHATEVER YOU DO, WARN YOUR CREW NOT TO **ALARM** THE PASSENGERS.' "

IT'S **TRUE**, I TELL YOU. THERE ARE FOUR MERSON SHIPS OUTSIDE RIGHT NOW. THE CAPTAIN HAS THAT JEDI AND HIS DROID UP ON THE BRIDGE WITH HIM, AND...

BY THE SEVEN RINGS OF MY HOME WORLD--WE'RE ALL GOING TO **DIE!**

AREN'T THE MERSONS... **SLAVERS?**

I'M **SORRY**, GENERAL, BUT WORD HAS **ALREADY SPREAD** TO THE BAR.

THEN IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

OUR PROBLEM IS OUT **THERE**, OBI-WAN.

"'FOOD--AND **DRINKS**--ARE PART OF THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM, SO DON'T **WORRY** ABOUT THE PASSENGERS.'"

PING

CAPTAIN QUASAR! ALL FOUR MERSON SHIPS HAVE JUST SWUNG IN OUR DIRECTION!

MR. RORK IS CORRECT. UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, THOSE SHIPS ARE PREPARING TO ATTACK.

IMPOSSIBLE.

THEY *KNOW* WE'RE OUT HERE, AND WITH ALL OF THE PRECAUTIONS YOU'VE TAKEN, THAT SHOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. UNLESS...

BY THE *FORCE*... THEY MUST BE RECEIVING A SIGNAL FROM *WITHIN THIS SHIP.*

OBI-WAN, I'M JUST A *PEACETIME* SPACE-MAN! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WAR-FARE! WILL YOU TAKE COMMAND?

IF YOU WISH. WHAT ARE YOUR ARMAMENTS?

ARM--? YOU MUST BE *JOKING*, MAN! THIS IS A *PLEASURE* CRUISER!

ONE THAT CAR-RIES A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT DIGNITARIES AND COSTLY STORES. YOU MUST HAVE *SOME* DEFENSES.

ONLY TWO STANDARD *ENERGY-CANNONS.*

AGAINST FOUR ORDINARY SCOUT SHIPS, THAT MAY BE ENOUGH!

ONE OF 'EM'S COMING IN AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK, SIR.

THEN FIRE ON MY SIGNAL...

...NOW!

SKRAM

"GUIDED ONLY BY THE **FORCE** THAT GIVES EVERY JEDI KNIGHT HIS POWER, BEN COMMANDED THE CRUISER THROUGH THE UNEQUAL BATTLE..."

WE LACK THEIR MANEUVERABILITY...

YOOOSH

SO WE MUST MAKE ***THEM*** COME TO ***OUR*** GUNS...

...THUSLY.

SKRAKOW

BUT, SIR, WITH OUR ***ENGINES*** ON, WON'T THE MERSONS BE ABLE TO...

EVEN IF THE FIGHTING DRAWS MORE SHIPS, WE CAN LOSE THEM EASILY ENOUGH BY RESUMING OUR DRIFT IN THE BELT. IT'S ONLY VISUAL CONTACT WE HAVE TO FEAR FOR THE MOMENT...

...AND SO WE MUST CONCENTRATE ON THOSE LAST TWO SHIPS.

MR. RORK... IN EIGHT SECONDS, I WANT YOU TO FIRE THE FRONT AND REAR GUNS SIMULTANEOUSLY.

BUT, GENERAL...

THREE SECONDS...

FIRE!

KRAKAROOM

INCREDIBLE! *TWO* SHIPS AT ONCE! I DON'T KNOW *HOW* YOU DID IT, BUT THAT'S ALL OF THEM!

GOOD. RESUME ***SILENT RUNNING*** PROCEDURES IMMEDIATELY.

SIR... YOUR REMARK ABOUT A *SIGNAL* FROM THIS SHIP... I THINK IT'S BEING *REPEATED* DOWN IN THE LOUNGE.

WHAT?

CAPTAIN, YOU AND YOUR MEN SEE IF YOU CAN LOCATE WHERE THE SIGNAL'S COMING FROM, IF IT EXISTS.

RKO AND I WILL DO WHAT WE CAN TO ALLAY THE PASSENGERS' FEARS.

AND, WHEN BEN AND RKO REACHED THE LOUNGE...

YOU LYING *SNEAK!* HOW MUCH DID THE MERSONS PAY YOU?

IT APPEARS WE'RE STILL IN TIME TO PREVENT AN ACT WHOSE CONSEQUENCES WE MAY *ALL* REGRET.

KEEP *AWAY* FROM ME, ALL OF YOU!

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PREVENT *ANYTHING*, JEDI!

YOU SAID SOMEONE ON THIS SHIP IS SIGNALLING THE MERSONS, AND WE ALL *KNOW* WHO THAT SOMEONE IS!

BUT WHAT *PROOF* HAVE YOU?

WE DON'T *NEED* PROOF! EVERYONE *KNOWS* WHAT KIND OF MAN TRYLL IS!

THIS WON'T BE THE FIRST TIME HE'S WORKED WITH SLAVERS

DON'T YOU *SEE?* HE SOLD THIS SHIP AND EVERYONE *ON* IT!

THE ONLY THING I SEE IS THAT YOU'VE ALL TAKEN GOOD ADVANTAGE OF THE SHIP'S STOCK OF LIQUORS AND STIMULANTS--

--AND THAT YOU'RE ALL TOO *FRIGHTENED* TO THINK *CLEARLY.*

YOU'VE GOT TO *PROTECT* ME, KENOBI! YOU'RE A *JEDI*-- IT'S YOUR *DUTY!*

I *HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!*

AND YOU'D HARDLY ADMIT IT IF YOU HAD, EH, MR. TRYLL?

WAIT... I SEE IT *ALL* NOW! THIS AFTERNOON I OVERHEARD TRYLL OFFERING KENOBI A *PARTNERSHIP.* THEY'RE IN THIS *TOGETHER!*

YEAH! WE SAW WHAT THE JEDI AND HIS DROID DID TO JOEY ORSEL TODAY!

LET'S GET THEM ALL!

"AND THE CROWD BEGAN TO ADVANCE...

"WHILE IN HIS MIND'S EYE, BEN COULD SEE..."

MORE MERSON SHIPS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY APPROACHING. IF I DON'T ACT SWIFTLY, IT MAY BE TOO *LATE* FOR US ALL.

PING

THAT'S IT, JEDI! THEY MEAN *NOTHING* TO YOU!

CUT THE WHOLE *BUNCH* DOWN!

VORSH

I DON'T THINK *THAT* WILL BE NECESSARY--

--AS *THIS* FERMENTATION DEVICE IS THE SOURCE OF *ALL* OUR TROUBLES!

FOOSHT

"OUT IN THE ASTEROID BELT, THE MERSON SHIPS LOST TRACK OF THE PLEASURE CRUISER AND BEGAN TO WANDER AIMLESSLY...

"...AS THE SOURCE OF THE MICROWAVE EMANATIONS THAT HAD ATTRACTED THEM WAS DESTROYED!"

JEDI... I DON'T KNOW HOW I CAN *EVER* THANK YOU.

DON'T *TRY*, MR. TRYLL.

RKO, IF YOU'D CARE TO RETIRE TO OUR CABIN, WE MIGHT *FINISH* THIS JOURNEY IN PEACE.

YES, SIR.

"AND AFTER THEY REACHED ALDERAAN, THE DROID TOLD MY FATHER ABOUT THE ENTIRE ADVENTURE."

WELL, IT WAS *TERRIFIC* HEARING ABOUT BEN AGAIN.

IF YOU'LL PARDON MY SAYING, PRINCESS LEIA, 68-RKO MUST HAVE BEEN A *MASTER* STORYTELLER.

HRONK

YEAH, YOUR ROYALNESS, YOU TELL A PRETTY GOOD STORY YOURSELF...

...EVEN IF YOU DID *JAZZ* IT UP WITH ALL THAT HOCUS-POCUS ABOUT THE *FORCE*.

BUT RIGHT NOW, OUR SHIP IS REPAIRED...

...SO LET'S GET OUT OF THIS QUADRANT BEFORE WE FIND OURSELVES IN ANOTHER *MESS!*

NEXT ISSUE: WE PICK UP ON OUR REGULAR STORYLINE AND THE...

SIEGE AT YAVIN!

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ARCHIE GOODWIN WRITER / EDITOR — CARMINE INFANTINO & GENE DAY ARTISTS — JOE ROSEN LETTERER — BEN SEAN COLORIST — JIM SHOOTER CONSULTING EDITOR

SEIGE AT YAVIN!

DAWN ON THE FOURTH MOON! TIE FIGHTERS SHRIEK DOWN INTO STILL SURFACE MISTS HANGING ABOVE THE JUNGLE. THE LEAD SHIP'S ENERGY CANNONS POUND...

*...AND A REBEL LOOKOUT STATION GIVES ITS **LAST WARNING.***

LG382

AT THE ALLIANCE STRONGHOLD IN THE MASSASI RUINS, **ALARMS** SOUND, PILOTS SCRAMBLE, GUN CREWS CHARGE TO THEIR EMPLACEMENTS...

AND FOR THE **THIRD TIME** IN AS MANY DAYS...

THERE GOES **ANOTHER FLIGHT** INTO THE GRINDER!

LET'S GIVE 'EM SOME **GROUND SUPPORT!**

THEN, AS THE GREAT RED GAS GIANT THAT IS THE PLANET YAVIN SILENTLY WATCHES... **HELL** EXPLODES IN THE SKIES OF ITS FOURTH MOON!

IT FINALLY **ENDS** AS IT HAS BEFORE... WITH THE ENEMY IN SWIFT **RETREAT.**

BUT AT A **PRICE**... ALWAYS AT A TERRIBLE PRICE.

LITTLE BY LITTLE... THEY'RE ***WHITTLING AWAY*** OUR FORCES! FORCES ***STILL*** NOT REBUILT TO THEIR LEVEL BEFORE THE BATTLE OF THE ***DEATH STAR.***

AND WE DON'T KNOW ***WHERE*** IN THE NAME OF THE FORCE THEY'RE ***COMING*** FROM!

TO CONSTANTLY THROW SO MANY ***TIE*** FIGHTERS AT US, IT ***HAS*** TO BE ONE OF THOSE BIG IMPERIAL ***BATTLE CRUISERS,*** GENERAL DODONNA.

NO! TRACKING EQUIPMENT WOULD HAVE DETECTED ANYTHING IN THE STAR DESTROYER CLASS ***LONG*** AGO!

WELL, OUR RECON PATROLS CAN'T FIND A ***THING*** ON THE OTHER MOONS--

MAYBE YOU SCANNER JOCKEYS THINK WE'RE FIGHTING ***GHOSTS*** UP THERE!

GENTLEMEN...! FIGHTING AMONG ***OURSELVES*** IS THE ***LAST THING*** WE CAN AFFORD.

WE'VE GOT TO WORK ***TOGETHER*** TO FIND AN ***ANSWER***...OR THE ALLIANCE WON'T ***SURVIVE!***

CENTARES! *OUTER-MOST OF THE MID-SYSTEMS TRADING WORLDS. LAST CIVILIZED STOP FOR THOSE DOING BUSINESS IN THE GALACTIC BACKWATERS, OR TAKING A FLING AT EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN...*

...OR HOPING TO ***ESCAPE*** THE LONG ARM OF THE ***EMPIRE.***

YOU CITIZENS HAVE MADE A REAL SWEET ***TRADE.*** TAKE THE WORD OF ***JORMAN THOAD,*** THE PLANET'S LARGEST DEALER IN USED STARCRAFT.

THIS SHIP'S NOT SO FANCY AS THAT ***YACHT*** YOU CAME IN, BUT--

"--BUT IT'S GOT THE DRIVE AND ARMAMENT *NEEDED* IN THE OUTERWORLDS!" WE *HEARD* THE SALES PITCH--

JUST SO THEY *KEEP* WORKING AS WELL AS THEY DID IN THE *DEMONSTRATION RUN.*

LAD, YOU HAVE THE JORMAN THOAD *GUARANTEE.*

THAT MAY NOT *HELP* IF WE AREN'T *ALIVE* TO HOLD YOU TO IT!

MASTER LUKE, ARTOO AND I HAVE *TRANSFERRED* EVERYTHING TO THE NEW SHIP.

NICE PAIR OF *DROIDS*... BIT ON THE *WORN* SIDE. IF YOU'D LIKE TO GET RID OF *THEM*, I'VE A COUSIN OVER IN OLD TOWN WHO--

TA-DOOT!

FOR A CHANGE, I *AGREE* WITH YOU, ARTOO... HE *DOES* SEEM WORSE THAN A *JAWA!*

WE *WANT* OUR DROIDS, THOAD... AND INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT *CONDITIONS* IN THE VARIOUS OUTWORLD SECTORS.

NO BETTER, NO WORSE THAN *USUAL*--

UNLESS YOU'RE HEADED WHERE THAT HOUSE OF TAGGE *MINING EXPLORER* IS BOUND... THE *GORDIAN REACH!*

THE GORDIAN REACH...? I-ISN'T THAT WHERE THE *YAVIN* SYSTEM LIES...?!

YAVIN. KRYLON. TORQUE. A *JILLION* MORE. RUMOR HAS IT TAGGE IS ON TO A BIG *SPICE STRIKE* ON ONE OF 'EM--

--AND BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPERIAL CONNECTIONS... THE EMPIRE'S *BLOCKADED* THE SECTOR!

SO I WOULDN'T PLAN ON TRAVELING *THERE.*

WISH I HAD AN *IMPERIAL GENERAL* IN THE FAMILY LIKE THE TAGGES. THEN MAYBE *I* COULD GET IN ON SUCH--

BUT I SEE YOU ARE ANXIOUS TO *DEPART!*

REMEMBER JORMAN THOAD WHEN YOU HAVE *OTHER* LUXURY YACHTS TO TRADE FOR MODEST BUT DEPENDABLE CRAFTS!

*AND SOON, THE HASTILY ACQUIRED SHIP IS BREAKING **FREE** OF CENTARES' ATMOSPHERE...*

*...CLIMBING FOR **DEEP SPACE.***

IT'S *INCREDIBLE,* PRINCESS...! EVERYTIME WE GET *CLOSE* TO MAKING IT BACK TO REBEL BASE--

--SOMETHING POPS UP TO GET IN OUR *WAY!*

AT LEAST WE'VE GOTTEN RID OF THE *YACHT,* LUKE.* IF DARTH VADER IS STILL IN PURSUIT... HE CAN'T *TRACE* US THROUGH THAT.

BUT IF HE'S *NOT* TRAILING US... HE MAY BE AFTER *HAN!*

ACQUIRED IN **STAR WARS* 23. -- ARCHIE G.

WHEN HE ISN'T PULLING MY *LEG* ABOUT SOMETHING... HAN'S KIND'A LIKE A *BIG BROTHER.* IF ANYTHING'S *HAPPENED* TO HIM--

WE *HAD* TO SPLIT UP TO ESCAPE LORD VADER, LUKE! I'M *SURE* WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN *SOON*--

WE... WE *HAVE* TO BE!

THAT SOUNDS SORT OF *SERIOUS.* LATELY I THOUGHT LEIA SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN *ME,* BUT *NOW*--

AW, *NO!* HAN'S A GOOD GUY, BUT SHE CAN'T *REALLY* BE IN *LOVE* WITH HIM--

--CAN SHE?

VRR-KLIK WEET!

PRINCESS...! ARTOO SAYS HE'S GETTING THAT *HOUSE OF TAGGE SHIP* YOU WONDERED ABOUT ON THE *SCANNER*--

HE CLAIMS IT'S ABOUT TO GO INTO *WARP*--

"--AND THAT ITS PRESENT POSITION AND HEADING INDICATE A COURSE FOR THE *YAVIN VICINITY!*"

SHOULDN'T WE BE CONCERNED ABOUT GETTING THROUGH THE EMPIRE'S *BLOCKADE* INSTEAD OF OVER SOME LUMBERING *SPICE SNIFFER?*

LUKE, THERE'S *NO SPICE* IN THAT SECTOR--

--THE ALLIANCE MADE *CERTAIN* WHEN WE PICKED THE LOCATION FOR A *BASE.* THE LAST THING WE *WANTED*--

--WAS A CONSTANT STREAM OF *SPICE HUNTERS* IN THE AREA!

THEN WHY ARE TAGGE *EXPLORERS* GOING *IN* THERE, PRINCESS? WHAT'S THIS BLOCKADE ALL *ABOUT?!*

I THINK THE EMPIRE'S *AFRAID*, LUKE.

PRINCESS, NO ONE'S GOT MORE *FAITH* IN REBEL FIGHTING ABILITY THAN *ME*--

--BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'VE GOT THE *IMPERIAL WAR MACHINE* PARALYZED WITH FRIGHT!

THAT'S NOT *QUITE* WHAT I MEANT, LUKE. BUT CONSIDER--

BESIDES OTHER EARLIER VICTORIES, WE'VE *DESTROYED* THEIR MOST AWESOME WEAPON...THE *DEATH STAR!*

THAT'S *NOT* THE KIND OF NEWS THAT MAKES IT *EASY* FOR THEM TO CONTROL THE GALAXY.

LEIA, YOU THINK THE *BLOCKADE* IS AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP THAT DEFEAT *SECRET?*

PARTLY. BY NOW, THE EMPIRE COULD HAVE SENT A MASSIVE *FLEET* IN RETALIATION--

BUT SUPPOSE OUR FORCES *ABANDONED* YAVIN AS THEY ONCE DID *DANTOOINE?*

OR WORSE YET: PULLED ANOTHER *VICTORY* OUT OF THE HAT?

THAT'S WHAT THE EMPIRE FEARS, LUKE. AND UNTIL THEY COME UP WITH SOMETHING TO EQUAL--OR *EXCEED*-- THE DEATH STAR, I THINK THEY'RE PLAYING A MORE *SNEAKY GAME*...USING THIS "SPICE STRIKE" BUSINESS AS *COVER!*

TO LEARN *WHAT* THAT GAME IS... WE'VE *GOT* TO FOLLOW THAT MINING EXPLORER THROUGH *WARP.*

THIS *CLOSE* ON THEIR HEELS THAT COULD BE *TRICKY*, PRINCESS!

THREEPIO, LINK ARTOO DEETOO TO THE SHIPBOARD *COMPUTER.* WITH *HIM* AUGMENTING ITS EMERGENCY CALIBRATION SYSTEM--

--AND THE *PILOT* WHO BROUGHT DOWN THE *DEATH STAR* AT THE CONTROLS, WHAT DO WE HAVE TO *WORRY* ABOUT?

OTHER THAN COMING OUT OF HYPER-SPACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TAGGE SHIP'S *EXHAUST TUBES*--?

NOT A *THING!*

FA-BREET!

ARTOO DEETOO, IF *YOU'VE* THOUGHT OF ANYTHING *ELSE*... WE DON'T WANT TO *KNOW* ABOUT IT!

*MEANWHILE, **WITHIN** THE BIG COMMERCIAL CRAFT LUKE AND LEIA PURSUE...*

COME AT ME *AGAIN*, SHANKS.

NO, *NO!* YOU'RE *TOO EASY!* I CAN'T GROW *BETTER* UNLESS I'M ADEQUATELY *CHALLENGED!*

URAAMP!

YOU'RE TOO *SKILLFUL*, BARON TAGGE! ONLY A *JEDI KNIGHT* COULD EQUAL YOU NOW--

--AND *THEY* NO LONGER *EXIST!*

ONE DOES, SHANKS, AT LEAST HE *USED* TO BE--

ZAAMP!

-- DARTH VADER! WHOSE OWN *LIGHT SABER* LEFT ME LIKE *THIS!*

THE ELDEST BROTHER OF THE TAGGE LINE *HELPLESS*... WITHOUT MY *CYBER-VISION.*

SO I PRACTICE *CONSTANTLY* WITH THIS SILLY, OUTMODED WEAPON OF A FOOLISH, EXTINCT BAND OF MEN--

AND *SOMEDAY*, SHANKS... I'LL BE *READY*. READY TO *REPAY* DARTH VADER IN KIND... AND WITH *INTEREST!*

BARON TAGGE--!

SIR, WE'RE COMING OUT OF *WARP*... AND INSTRUMENTS INDICATE THERE MAY BE A SMALL *SHIP* FOLLOWING US!

A DARING-- IF HIGHLY *RISKY*-- WAY TO SLIP THROUGH THE EMPIRE'S *BLOCKADE*.

SEE THEY DON'T *SUCCEED*.

*SECONDS AFTER THE BARON'S WORDS ARE SPOKEN, A **HATCH** OPENS AND...*

...MINES ARE SWIFTLY SCATTERED THROUGH THE SECTOR!

GOOD! I DIDN'T BUILD THE FAMILY FORTUNE BY LETTING *ADMIRATION* FOR A FOE'S DARING KEEP ME FROM *DESTROYING* THEM!

LET'S GET ON WITH OUR *DELIVERY*.

*AND WHEN THE PURSUING CRAFT'S COMPUTER **DISENGAGES** FROM SUPRA-LIGHT DRIVE...*

THE AREA'S *BOOBY-TRAPPED!*

ARTOO! CUT IN THE *SHIELDS!*

BA-DOOM!

THREE-PIO! WHAT'S HE *SAYING?!*

HE WISHES *JORMAN THOAD* WERE WITH US... THAT ONE HIT HAS OUR SHIELDS *FAILING!*

IT'S NO *CONSOLATION*, LUKE... BUT THOSE ARE *HEAVY DUTY MINES!*

TWO OR THREE OF THEM ARE ENOUGH TO CRACK THE ENERGY SHIELDS OF *ANY* CRAFT THIS SIZE!

TAKE OVER THE *SIDE BATTERY*, PRINCESS... AND DO LIKE *I'M* DOING WITH THE *FORWARD GUNS--*

--*GET* THOSE THINGS BEFORE THEY GET *US!*

THEY'RE *MAGNETICALLY CHARGED*, LUKE! THEY'LL BE DRAWN TO OUR *HULL PLATING--*

--AND *FASTER* THAN WE CAN BLAST AND MANEUVER!

ARTOO! DISENGAGE THE *COMPUTER!* TRANSFER ALL CONTROL TO *ME!*

QUICKLY, ARTOO... THERE'S *ANOTHER* BLAZE AFT!

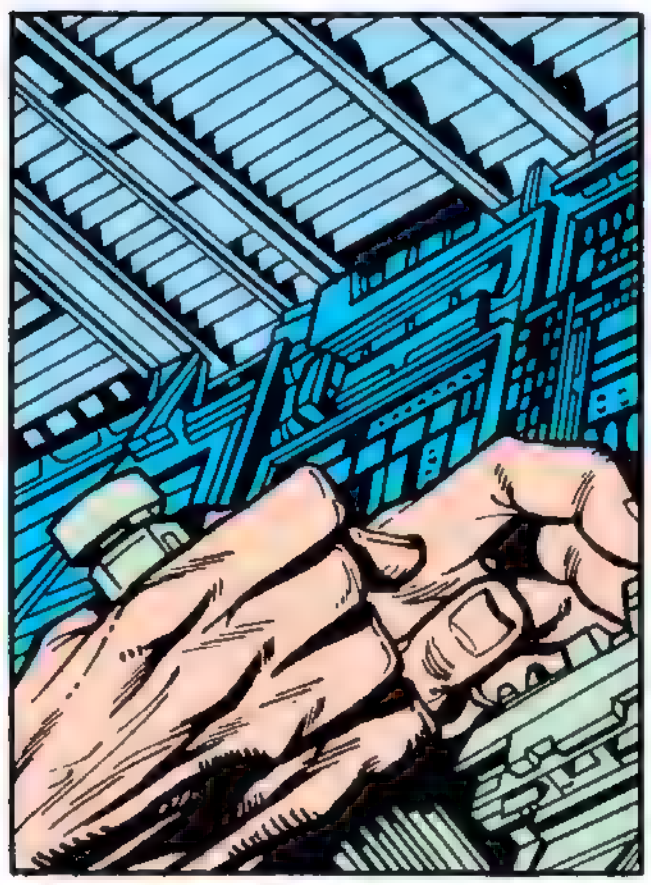
LUKE! THE PATTERN IS *TIGHTENING* ON US!

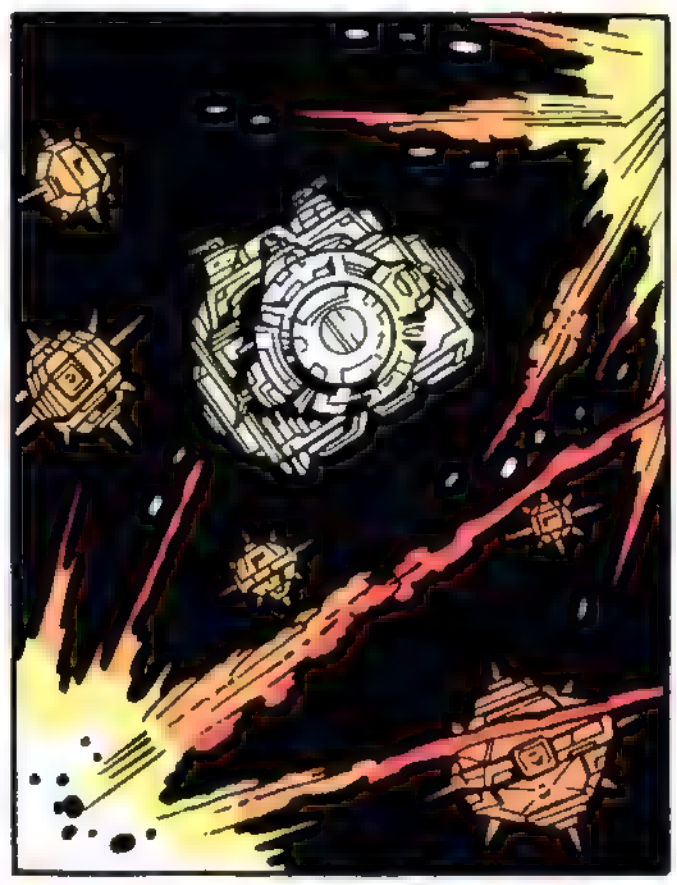
LUKE...?!

BUT THE BOY FROM TATOOINE NO LONGER **HEARS**, HIS MIND IS DIVORCED FROM CONSCIOUS THOUGHT.

HE IS **ONE** WITH THE MACHINE HE CONTROLS, ACTING BY WHAT HE SENSES AND WHAT HE FEELS.

THE TINY SHIP **DANCES** IN RESPONSE, TWISTING, ALTERING DIRECTIONS WITH EYEBLINK SWIFTNESS!





UNTIL...

YOU BEAT OUT THAT LAST *CLUSTER*, LUKE... THEY ALL CAME TOGETHER ON *EACH OTHER!* A- AND--

--THE WAY AHEAD IS *CLEAR!* WE'RE *THROUGH* THE MINES!

THANKS, FLYBOY!

ER... PRINCESS? MASTER LUKE...? ARTOO AND I HAVE ALL *DAMAGE* UNDER CONTROL, BUT--

-- HE REPORTS ALL SCANNING AND TRACKING EQUIPMENT HAVE GONE *BERSERK!*

NO *WONDER!* WE'RE DRIFTING INTO *YAVIN'S* GRAVITATIONAL FIELD!

THE *GASES* IT'S MADE OF CREATE CONSTANT *STORMS* AND ATMOSPHERIC TRICKS! THIS *CLOSE*--

--IT'S LIKE ONE HUGE, NATURAL *JAMMING DEVICE!*

SOMEONE *ELSE* IS ORBITING HERE, PRINCESS... THE *TAGGE SHIP!*

AND IT SEEMS TO BE *INTENTIONAL!*

GET US BEHIND ONE OF THOSE SMALLER *MOONS* BEFORE WE'RE *SPOTTED*, LUKE--

--I'M GOING *OUTSIDE* TO DO SOME *SPYING.*

NOT WITHOUT *ME!*

FROM ANYONE *ELSE,* THAT KIND OF PROTECTIVENESS MIGHT BE *INSULTING...* SOMEHOW, YOU MAKE IT *QUAINT.*

MOMENTS LATER, TWO FIGURES IN ***SURVIVAL ARMOR*** *JET DOWN TOWARD THE POCKED, AIRLESS SPHERE BELOW...*

...MAKING THEIR WAY TO THE LITTLE MOON'S ***FAR SIDE.***

THERE IT *IS,* PRINCESS. WHAT IT'S *DOING* IS ANYBODY'S GUESS!

WE *KNOW* IT'S NOT LOOKING FOR *SPICE.*

IF ONLY THESE *MACRO-BINOCULARS* COULD PEER *INSIDE* THAT THING!

THE PILOTS ARE NEARLY READY TO *LAUNCH,* BARON.

I'LL SEE THEM *OFF,* SHANKS. I *PLEASURE* IN VIEWING THE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY OF THE HOUSE OF TAGGE IN *ACTION.*

PARTICULARLY IN THE CAUSE OF THE *EMPIRE,* SIR...?

PARTICULARLY IN AN OPERATION THAT IS *SUCCEEDING* WHERE VADER, TARKIN AND THE DEATH STAR *FAILED!*

LOOK AT THEM, SHANKS! REPLACEMENTS FOR ANY SHIPS THE REBELS MAY HAVE STRUCK DOWN!

LET THE SITH LORD FOLLOW HIS "FORCE," SCRAMBLING ABOUT THE GALAXY, SEEKING THOSE WHO SHAMED HIM IN THE DEATH STAR BATTLE--

--WE'RE BEATING THE ALLIANCE HERE!

I'M PROUD TO BE MILITARY AIDE ON THIS EXPERIMENT, SIR.

AND FORTUNATE, SHANKS! FOR WHEN IT'S OVER, DARTH VADER AND HIS WIZARD'S WAYS WON'T HOLD THE EMPEROR'S FANCY... MY FAMILY WILL! THEN I SHALL--

BUT TIME ESCAPES US. ON TO THE OBSERVATION PORT!

TOO BAD THAT THE SAME ATMOSPHERIC INTERFERENCE THAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE REBELS TO DETECT OUR PRESENCE HERE--

--ALSO HAMPERS OUR FOLLOWING THE OPERATION IN CLOSE UP BY SCANNER.

LAUNCHING NOW, BARON TAGGE!

AND, FROM THE SURFACE OF THE NEARBY MOON, LUKE AND LEIA OBSERVE...

A TIE FIGHTER FORMATION...! AND HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE SURFACE OF YAVIN!

THAT'S SUICIDE, PRINCESS! FLYING BLINDLY INTO ALL THOSE GASES... INSTRUMENTS UNABLE TO WORK...

THEY'LL NEVER COME UP AGAIN!

BUT AS THE AMAZED PAIR **CONTINUE** WATCHING...

A SUDDEN **STORM** SEEMS TO BUILD IN THE AREA THE **TIE** SHIPS DIVE TOWARD...

TROPOSPHERIC GASES SWIRL MADLY AT HURRICANE FORCE. AND, AS WITH **ANY** HURRICANE...

...A CALM **EYE** OPENS AT ITS CENTER!

AND THAT EYE BECOMES A **SAFE CORRIDOR,** DOWN WHICH THE ENTIRE FLIGHT **PLUNGES** TO BE LOST FROM SIGHT...

...AS THE STORM **ENDS** WITH A SWIFTNESS THAT **CANNOT** BE NATURAL!

L-LUKE...! THE EMPIRE'S GOT SOMETHING *IN* THERE THAT *CREATES* THOSE STORMS...! SOME KIND OF *BASE!*

I GUESS A *SPACE STATION* COULD *EXIST* IN THOSE GASES... LONG AS THERE WAS A WAY TO *SUPPLY* IT--

--AND FROM WHAT WE JUST *SAW,* THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE *THAT!* I DON'T KNOW HOW THE SHIPS *SIGNAL* FOR THE STORM CORRIDOR TO BE *OPENED,* BUT--

THAT CAN *WAIT,* LUKE--

--WE'VE GOT TO *WARN* THE ALLIANCE!

AND, BACK INSIDE THEIR SHIP...

WHOEVER CAME UP WITH THIS IS *CLEVER*, LUKE. OPERATING SO *CLOSE* TO YAVIN... ON THE *OPPOSITE SIDE* FROM OUR BASE... MAKES CHANCES OF DISCOVERY *MINIMAL*.

AND EVEN IF OUR *RECON PATROLS* SIGHTED THEM--

--ONE STRAY *MINING EXPLORER* WOULDN'T ALARM THEM. THEY'D ASSUME IT'D BE MOVING ON ONCE IT BECAME OBVIOUS THERE WAS NO *SPICE* IN THE AREA.

UNLESS THE RECON CAME ON 'EM JUST AS THEY WERE *UNLOADING* THE *TIES*, LIKE WE SAW, PRINCESS.

THE ODDS ARE *AGAINST* IT. BUT THE TAGGE PEOPLE MUST STILL TAKE *SOME* PRECAUTIONS--

YEAH! ONLY IT CAN'T BE *SCANNERS* OR NORMAL *TRACKING EQUIPMENT* BECAUSE OF THE ATMOSPHERIC INTERFERENCE!

THAT LEAVES JUST *ONE* THING--

BAD NEWS, MASTER LUKE! NOW THAT WE'RE MOVING *OUT* SOMEWHAT FROM THAT GREAT GLOB OF GAS, ARTOO'S *SENSORS* DETECT--

NEVER *MIND*, THREEPIO! THE PRINCESS AND I HAVE ALREADY *GUESSED*--

A TIE FIGHTER PATROL... FLYING *LOOK-OUT* FOR THAT HOUSE OF TAGGE VESSEL!

COMING *IN* THE WAY WE DID... WE PROBABLY JUST *MISSED* THEIR FIRST SWEEP--

--BUT OUR TIMING WAS *PERFECT* FOR THEIR *RETURN!*

I'LL GET BACK TO THE OTHER SET OF *GUNS*, LUKE! IS THERE ANY HOPE OF *OUTRUNNING* THEM UNTIL THREEPIO CAN RAISE *HELP* ON THE COMMINCATOR?

IF THERE *WERE*, PRINCESS--

--IT'S *GONE* NOW! THAT INITIAL HIT JUST COST US AN *ENGINE!*

AND OUR *COMMUNICATION SYSTEM*, SIR! CALLING FOR AID IS NOW *IMPOSSIBLE*... NOT UNLIKE THE *ODDS* ON OUR SURVIVAL!

NEXT ISSUE: **DOOM MISSION!**

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HOMECOMING! A NOT SO FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO LUKE, LEIA, AND THE DROIDS RETURNING TO THE YAVIN SYSTEM. THEY DISCOVERED IMPERIAL RAIDERS IN ALLIANCE TERRITORY...
...AND GOT DISCOVERED THEMSELVES!
IT'S NO USE!
OUR COMMUNICATOR'S OUT, ONE ENGINE'S GONE, AND OUR SHIELDS ARE FAILING--
EVEN THE FORCE COULDN'T SAVE US NOW!
DOOM MISSION!

WHY HAVEN'T I SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING DOOMED AS I USUALLY DO...?

FR-BRIIT?

BECAUSE MASTER LUKE ALREADY SEEMS TO BE SAYING IT... AND SOMEHOW IT SOUNDS FAR MORE CONVINCING FROM HIM!

LUKE, WE'RE NOT THAT FAR FROM OUR BASE ON THE FOURTH MOON--

THERE MUST BE SOME TRICK WE CAN PULL!

I'VE USED 'EM ALL TO GET US THIS FAR--!

--BUT SHOOTING LIKE THAT SURE HELPS! HOW'D A GIRL FROM A PLANET WITH NO WEAPONS GET SO GOOD WITH THEM?

PROMISE TO GET US OUT OF HERE, FLYBOY, AND I'LL TELL YOU!

TOO LATE, PRINCESS!

THIS BUCKET OF BOLTS JUST TOOK ONE HIT MORE THAN EVEN JORMAN THOAD * WOULD CLAIM IT COULD HANDLE!

YOU AND THE DROIDS GET INTO THE ESCAPE POD! I'LL TRY TO DRAW THOSE TWO SCAVENGERS OFF SO YOU CAN--

LUKE--!

* THE DEALER IN USED STARCRAFT WHO TRADED THE SHIP TO THEM LAST ISH! -- ARCHIE.

X-WING FIGHTERS! IT'S A REBEL RECONNAISSANCE PATROL!

IT'S MORE THAN THAT... IT'S A MIRACLE!

THERE GOES THE SECOND TIE SHIP... LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOING TO CRASH ON THAT MOON!

ARTOO...! THREEPIO...! IF YOU KEEP THE FLAMES AT BAY A LITTLE LONGER--

--WE MIGHT MAKE IT AFTER ALL!

AND UNDER X-WING ESCORT, THE LITTLE SHIP FIGHTS ITS WAY INTO THE ATMOSPHERE OF YAVIN'S FOURTH MOON...

...WHERE AT THE MASSASI RUINS, A ROUGH LANDING AND A WARM GREETING WAIT.

PRINCESS! WE'D GIVEN YOU AND YOUNG SKYWALKER UP AS LOST! SINCE THE IMPERIAL BLOCKADE OF THIS SECTOR, COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN SPOTTY AND--

WE'VE BROUGHT NEWS, GENERAL DODONNA... BUT I'M AFRAID IT ISN'T GOOD!

NOT MUCH *HAS* BEEN SINCE THE EMPIRE STARTED HITTING US IN ALMOST *DAILY RAIDS*, YOUR HIGHNESS.

PERHAPS *NOT*, GENERAL--

AND DESPITE STEPPED UP *PATROLS*--LIKE THE ONE THAT FOUND YOU--THEIR HIDDEN BASE *REMAINS* A SECRET!

AND SWIFTLY... THESE ARE *BLOW UPS* FROM THE PHOTO-RECORDER UNIT OF MY MACRO-BINOCULARS!

HERE'S WHAT LUKE AND I FOUND ON THE *FAR SIDE* OF YAVIN--*

*ALSO *LAST ISSUE*.--ALSO ARCHIE.

THAT'S A HOUSE OF TAGGE *MINING EXPLORER!*

BUT THOSE AREN'T *SPICE PROBES* IT'S SENDING DOWN INTO YAVIN'S TROPOSHERE--

THEY'RE *TIE FIGHTERS*... PROBABLY *REPLACEMENTS* FOR ANY EMPIRE SHIPS YOU'VE *DESTROYED*.

THEY'LL BE *BLIND* IN THERE... *HELPLESS!*

YAVIN'S MADE UP OF NOTHING BUT *GASES*... SHIPS CAN'T OPERATE AMID THEM BECAUSE STORMS AND ATMOSPHERIC INTERFERENCE *JAM* ALL INSTRUMENTS!

SEE! THERE'S A STORM BUILDING UNDER THE TIES... THEY'RE *FINISHED!*

KEEP *WATCHING*, GENTLEMEN--

"THAT '*STORM*' SWIRLED THE GASES INTO A CYCLONIC *FUNNEL*... WITH A CALM *EYE* AT ITS CENTER. AND THAT EYE...

"...BECAME A *CORRIDOR* FOR THE TIES TO *TRAVEL* DOWN!"

T-THEY'VE SUNK SOME KIND OF *SPACE STATION* INTO YAVIN'S TROPOSPHERE...ONE THAT CAN *CREATE* THAT STORM CORRIDOR!

AND PROVIDES A *BASE* FROM WHICH TO CONTINUALLY *STRIKE* AT US!

NOT AS *SPECTACULAR* AS THE DEATH STAR, COMMANDER WILLARD... BUT NEARLY AS *INSIDIOUS* IN THE LONG RUN!

WELL, WE CRACKED THE DEATH STAR, GENERAL DODONNA...THERE *MUST* BE A WAY TO FIND AND DESTROY *THIS* THING!

WE HAD THE *PLANS* TO THE DEATH STAR, SKYWALKER--

WE COULD *LOSE* EVERY T-65 WE *POSSESS*--

--JUST TRYING TO *FIND* THE STATION IN THAT POISONOUS SOUP WHICH MAKES UP YAVIN'S ATMOSPHERE!

BUT THOSE *TIES* FIND IT AND *RETURN* TO IT EVERY RAID, SIR! *OUR* SHIPS--

ARE *GREAT*... BUT THEY DON'T HAVE HOUSE OF TAGGE *TECHNOLOGY!* THEIR FAMILY INDUSTRIES EMPLOY THOUSANDS OF SCIENTISTS ON *HUNDREDS* OF WORLDS.

ONE OF THEM MUST HAVE COME UP WITH A SIGNAL SYSTEM *STRONG* ENOUGH TO--

LUKE! WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?!*

ONE OF THOSE TIE FIGHTERS THAT ATTACKED US WENT *DOWN* INSTEAD OF BEING VAPORIZED! IF IT HAD SOME SIGNAL UNIT LIKE THE GENERAL *FIGURES*--

--THE THING MAY STILL BE *INTACT!*

SOMEBODY GET *ARTOO DEETOO* UP IN THIS BABY'S *DROID SOCKET!*

BEFORE ANYONE CAN GET OVER THEIR SURPRISE ENOUGH TO PROTEST, LUKE IS INTO THE SKIES AND ON HIS WAY...

...TO ONE OF MANY LESSER ORNAMENTS IN YAVIN'S BRIGHT NECKLACE OF MOONS...

...MADE DISTINCTIVE BY ANOTHER KIND OF ORNAMENTATION.

DA-WEET! FRIIT!

I MARK IT, ARTOO... AND IT LOOKS IN BETTER SHAPE THAN I EXPECTED

BUT THERE IS DANGER IN THAT. FOR IF THE FIGHTER IS INTACT...

...THE PILOT MAY BE AS WELL!

HOPED MY OWN OUTFIT MIGHT COME LOOKING FOR ME BEFORE THE REBELS--

--BUT AS LONG AS I'M FORCED TO USE THE REMOTE-DESTRUCT, AT LEAST I'M TAKING AN ENEMY WITH ME!

THERE ON THE MAIN PANEL, ARTOO...! NONE OF THE MANUALS I'VE STUDIED--

--INDICATE A UNIT LIKE THAT IN A TIE SHIP!

NO, ARTOO! NOT THERE, I SAID THE MAIN PANEL! WHY ARE YOU RIPPING OUT WIRING WHEN--

ARTOO! THAT'S A PROTON CHARGE DETONATOR--!

FRADOOP

BLASTED LITTLE DROID! BROKE THE TRANSMISSION--!

ARTOO!

VOOM!

VRRPOW!

ARTOO...?

IT IS SOMETIME LATER BEFORE THE Y-WING REAPPEARS AT THE REBEL BASE...

LUKE! I-- WE WERE GETTING FRANTIC! DID YOU--

I FOUND THE GADGET, PRINCESS... BUT I HAD TO REMOVE IT WITH-OUT ARTOO'S HELP.

IT TOOK A LOT MORE TIME.

WITHOUT ARTOO...? MASTER LUKE, YOU DON'T MEAN--

OH, DEAR! IT'S LIKE THE DEATH STAR BATTLE ALL OVER AGAIN! DO YOU THINK IT WILL TAKE LONG TO REPAIR HIM, SIR?

I-I GUESS THAT DEPENDS, THREEPIO--

--ON HOW MUCH THE IMPERIAL BLOCKADE HAS AFFECTED SUPPLIES.

AFFECTED--?! WITH ALL THE ATTACKS, WE'RE SCRAPIN' BOTTOM FOR EVERYTHING, SKYWALKER. THERE'S SOME WORKING R-2 UNITS THAT COULD USE HIS PARTS!

I KNOW YOU'RE FOND OF THAT LITTLE DROID, BUT AFTER ALL, IT'S--

DON'T TELL ME HE'S ONLY A MACHINE!

NIGHT ABOVE THE RUINS, A LONE FIGURE STARES AT THE SILENT STARS...

...AND IS JOINED BY ANOTHER.

LUKE...? IT'S VERY LATE. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING OUT HERE?

MEDITATING... TRYING TO BECOME MORE ATTUNED TO THE FORCE.

AND A LOT OF JUST PLAIN THINKING, TOO.

YOU WERE MISSED AT THE MEETING. OUR TECHNICIANS HAVE STUDIED THAT UNIT YOU BROUGHT BACK... A PLAN WAS DEVELOPED FOR USING IT.

MAYBE IF I'D HAD A PLAN BEFORE JUST JUMPING IN THAT Y-WING AND TAKING OFF--

--ARTOO WOULDN'T BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE SPARE PARTS RESERVE!

THE STUPID THING IS I THINK I WAS JUST TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR NOT COMPLETING MY ORIGINAL MISSION, PRINCESS. *

OTHER PILOTS WERE ALSO SENT TO LOOK FOR A SAFER BASE LOCATION, LUKE... NONE OF THEM EVEN MADE IT BACK!

EVERY MISSION CAN'T BE A SUCCESS... WAR JUST ISN'T THAT SIMPLE.

*SW #8.--AG.

NOR IS IT *FAIR*. THERE ARE MISSIONS FROM WHICH MEN CANNOT *POSSIBLY* RETURN...AND YET, WE STILL *SEND* THEM.

OFTEN... WE SEND OUR *BEST*.

GENERAL DODONNA...! *NO!* I THOUGHT LUKE WOULDN'T *HAVE* TO--

ANYONE ELSE IN SKY-WALKER'S CLASS IS ALSO A *FLIGHT COMMANDER*, PRINCESS... OUR LESS EXPERIENCED PILOTS *NEED* SUCH LEADER-SHIP.

BUT YOU'LL *THROW AWAY* THE LIFE OF THE MAN WHO DESTROYED THE *DEATH STAR!*

IF IT CAN PROLONG THE LIFE OF THE *ALLIANCE*, YOUR HIGHNESS... YES!

IT'S THE KIND OF DECISION YOUR *FATHER* WOULD HAVE MADE. AND, GIVEN THE TIME TO REFLECT... SO WOULD *YOU*.

NOBODY SEEMS TO BE *ASKING* ME, BUT IF YOU NEED A *VOLUNTEER*, GENERAL... I GUESS YOU'VE *GOT* HIM.

HOW ABOUT *SHOWING* ME WHAT I'M *IN* FOR?

SOON... IN THE VAST STONE CHAMBER THAT HOUSES THE REBEL FIGHTERS... A **SHIP** *IS READIED.*

WE'VE HAD THIS OLD *HULK* FOR YEARS... USED IT TO *FAMILIARIZE* OUR PILOTS WITH ENEMY CRAFT.

NOW IT'S OUT-FITTED WITH THAT TAGGE *SIGNAL DEVICE*...AND ENOUGH *PROTON CHARGES* TO DESTROY A CITY. UNFORTUNATELY--

WHEN I DESTROY MY *TARGET*, I DESTROY WHATEVER CREATES THAT *STORM CORRIDOR*... THE ONLY WAY *OUT* OF YAVIN'S GAS ATMOSPHERE.

I *UNDERSTAND*, GENERAL. AND SINCE WAITING WON'T MAKE IT ANY *EASIER*... I'M READY TO GO *NOW*.

LUKE CLIMBS INTO THE ONE-TIME IMPERIAL CRAFT AND IS TOWED OUTSIDE. MOMENTS LATER, HE ROARS INTO THE NIGHT SKY ABOVE THE FOURTH MOON...

...RACING TOWARD WHATEVER **DESTINY** WAITS ON THE FAR SIDE OF YAVIN.

MAY THE **FORCE** BE WITH YOU, BOY... **NOW** MORE THAN **EVER!**

WITHIN THE ANCIENT RUINS, ANOTHER SILENTLY **THINKS** WHAT GENERAL DODONNA HAS PUT INTO WORDS.

SHE HAS NOT **TRUSTED** HERSELF TO WATCH THE ACTUAL LAUNCH.

WHAT KIND OF **EXAMPLE** WOULD SHE BE IF A PRINCESS, SENATOR, LEADER AND SYMBOL OF THE REBEL ALLIANCE...

...SHOWED THAT SHE **CRIES?**

MEANWHILE, IN OTHER CHAMBERS, OTHER VIGILS ARE KEPT...

NOW SEE WHERE ALL YOUR ADVENTURING HAS **GOTTEN** YOU, ARTOO DEETOO?

EVEN **I** DON'T HAVE THE COMPONENTS NEEDED TO **FIX** YOU.

CAN'T YOU EVEN **BLEEP,** ARTOO...? CALL ME A **CARBON-SCORED CRY-BABY...?!**

I WON'T BE ABLE TO **BEAR** IT IF YOU'RE TURNED INTO **SPARE PARTS!**

SUCH IS THE MOOD AT THE BASE. ON THE MISSION...

THIS IS IT...! THE AREA WHERE LEIA AND I CAUGHT UP WITH THAT HOUSE OF TAGGE MINING EXPLORER--

--GENERAL DODONNA SENT A FLIGHT IN PURSUIT OF IT WHILE I WAS OUT AFTER THE SIGNAL DEVICE--

--BUT THE TAGGE SHIP HAD APPARENTLY ALREADY FLED THE AREA.

NO DOUBT IT'LL BE BACK WITH ANOTHER LOAD OF TIE FIGHTERS!

IT'S UP TO ME TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT WHEN THAT HAPPENS--

--THE BASE WHICH USES THEM IS GONE!

LUKE'S HAND FLICKS A SWITCH ON A CONTROL PANEL MODULE RECENTLY ADDED TO THE SALVAGED FIGHTER...

ACCORDING TO OUR TECHNOS... THIS SENDS OUT A SIGNAL AT HIGHER, MORE POWERFUL FREQUENCIES THAN ANYTHING WE'VE GOT.

SO IF IT WORKS--

--WHOEVER IS IN THAT MASS OF GAS OUGHT TO BE GETTING A FIX ON ME...! RIGHT ABOUT--

--NOW!

OUT OF YAVIN'S DENSE ATMOSPHERE, A WHIRLWIND REACHES UP... AND LUKE GUIDES HIS TIE CRAFT INTO ITS YAWNING MAW!

DOWN AND DOWN HE PLUNGES, RIDING THE STORM CORRIDOR TOWARD THE UNKNOWN, UNTIL SUDDENLY, AWESOMELY... HIS TARGET LOOMS IN SIGHT!

I-IT'S SOME KIND OF... GIANT TURBINE! STIRRING UP THE GASES... CREATING ITS OWN STORMS!

AND... THAT'S THE HOUSE OF TAGGE SHIP MOORED TO ITS SIDE!

AND ABOARD THE MINING EXPLORER...

BARON TAGGE! THE TURBINE STATION REPORTS A LONE TIE FIGHTER IS APPROACHING!

IT MUST BE ONE OF OUR COOKOUT SHIPS! WHEN THEY FAILED TO RETURN EARLIER--

--I FELT CERTAIN THE REBELS WERE ON TO US!

I-I... STILL WONDER IF WE SHOULD HAVE RETREATED DOWN INTO THIS MURK, SIR. IF ANYTHING EVER HAPPENED TO THE STATION--

MY STATION IS A SUCCESS, SHANKS. WE ARE SAFER HIDING FROM THE REBELS HERE--

--THAN DESPERATELY RACING TO MAKE SAFE WARPING DISTANCE WITH ALLIANCE FIGHTERS IN HOT PURSUIT!

WE'LL GO OUT WITH THE NEXT FLIGHT OFF TO RAID THE REBEL STRONGHOLD.

AND IT WON'T TAKE MANY MORE SUCH RAIDS BEFORE THAT STRONGHOLD CRUMBLES!

THEN, SHANKS, THE HOUSE OF TAGGE SHALL HOLD THE EMPEROR'S FAVOR INSTEAD OF THAT BLASTED WIZARD, DARTH VADER!

I'LL HAVE SWEET VENGEANCE ON THE DARK LORD WHO CURSED ME TO A LIFETIME OF CYBER-VISION AND--

WUMM!

BARON! WH-WHAT--?!

LUKE SKYWALKER HAS JUST PUT ONE OF HIS PROTON CHARGES INTO THE TURBINE STATION'S TIE FIGHTER HANGAR...

...AND KICKING THE SMALL CRAFT INTO AN ENGINE-STRAINING FULL REVERSE...

...HE SWIFTLY UNLEASHES HIS SECOND CHARGE!

THIS STATION DOESN'T HAVE THE ARMAMENT OF EVEN ONE TRENCH ON THE DEATH STAR... BUT IN THIS SOUP, IT DOESN'T NEED IT!

TRACKING INSTRUMENTS ARE USELESS! IF I LOSE VISUAL CONTACT WITH THE TARGET--

--THERE'S ALMOST NO CHANCE OF FINDING IT AGAIN!

SO WHILE I'VE GOT THE TURBINE ENGINE IN SIGHT... I'M GIVING IT ALL I'VE GOT!

AS GENERAL DODONNA SAID, THE TIE CARRIES ENOUGH PROTON CHARGES TO DESTROY A CITY. BARON TAGGE'S CREATION MAY BE BIGGER THAN THAT...

...BUT IT IS, IN ITS WAY, MORE VULNERABLE. ENGINES, REACTORS, WEAPON STORES ARE IN A MORE CONCENTRATED AREA. AND ONCE SOME START TO BLOW...

...THEY ALL SWIFTLY FOLLOW.

AND NOW, LUKE SKYWALKER'S PROBLEMS TRULY BEGIN.

WITHIN INSTANTS, THE EXPLOSIVE FLARE THAT MARKED THE SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS MISSION FADES...

...AND HE IS ALONE.

ALONE. FIGHTING TO TRIM AND KEEP TOGETHER A SHIP REFITTED IN HASTE, PUSHED BEYOND CAPABILITY IN DESPERATION.

ALONE. LOST WITHOUT INSTRUMENTS AMID SWIRLING, COLLIDING GASES THAT ARE THE PLANET YAVIN.

ALONE. NO WAY TO MARK UP OR DOWN, THE PATH OF SALVATION... OR DESTRUCTION.

YOU KNEW IT WOULD BE THIS WAY WHEN YOU *VOLUNTEERED*, SKYWALKER--

IT'S ONE OF THE *REASONS* YOU VOLUNTEERED.

VERTIGO SWEEPS LUKE'S BODY. DISORIENTATION. HE LETS *INSTINCT* GUIDE HIM. THE SHIP SEEMS TO *DIVE*.

THANKS TO MY FATHER, TO BEN KENOBI... I HAVE A SPECIAL *GIFT*. NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO *DIE* ON A MISSION LIKE THIS--

--WHEN I'VE GOT IT TO *USE*. ONLY... I HAVEN'T *MASTERED* IT.

WITHOUT A FIX ON UP OR DOWN, THE TIE SHIP COULD BE DOING ANYTHING...

I NEEDED BEN'S *VOICE* TO GUIDE ME ON THE DEATH STAR... I USED IT ALMOST *ACCIDENTALLY* AGAINST DARTH VADER ESCAPING THE WHEEL...

THE MIND DECEIVES THE BODY UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, PLAYS CRUEL TRICKS...

BUT I'VE BEEN *MEDITATING*... EXPANDING MY *FEELING*. I'VE USED THE ABILITY IN *SMALLER* TESTS... BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE CONSCIOUSLY *PLANNED* TO USE IT!

*PULL **OUT**, YOU FOOL, EVERY CONSCIOUS THOUGHT SCREAMS. PULL OUT OR **DIE** IN THE HARD FROZEN **CENTER** OF YAVIN!*

I *TRUST* IN WHAT BEN TAUGHT ME. I *BELIEVE* IN THE FORCE. AND *MORE*--

--I BELIEVE IN MYSELF!

AND LUKE'S REWARD FOR HIS FAITH IS THE STARRY SAFETY OF DEEP SPACE...

...AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS ALIVE, ABLE TO USE THIS GROWING ABILITY ANOTHER DAY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE EMPIRE.

THE SMALL CONTROL HE HAS ESTABLISHED OVER THE FORCE WILL NOT BE EASY TO MAINTAIN... HE WILL NOT ALWAYS BE ABLE TO SUMMON IT SO READILY.

BUT A STRIDE FORWARD HAS BEEN MADE, AND SHADOWS OF THE FUTURE CANNOT CLOUD LUKE'S EXUBERANCE AS HE REPORTS IN TO THE ALLIANCE BASE...

A REPORT THAT IS INTERCEPTED... BY A SHIP THAT SHOULDN'T EXIST!

THE YOUNG REBEL HAS NO NOTION THAT WE FOLLOWED HIM OUT--

--YOU GAVE THE ORDER TO CAST OFF FROM THE TURBINE STATION JUST IN TIME, BARON TAGGE!

IRONIC... THIS SKYWALKER ACTUALLY SAVED US!

PARTICULARLY SO SINCE WE ONLY KEPT HIM IN SIGHT FOR THE SATISFACTION OF DESTROYING HIM BEFORE WE PERISHED IN THOSE GASES OURSELVES! BUT, MIRACULOUSLY--

HE DID THE IMPOSSIBLE, SHANKS! AND RUINED MY CHANCES OF SHOWING UP DARTH VADER IN THE PROCESS!

SOMEDAY, I'LL LEARN HIS SECRET. THEN DO TO LUKE SKYWALKER--

--WORSE THAN THE SITH LORD DID TO ME!

NEXT ISSUE: THE ATTEMPT TO RESTORE ARTOO DEETOO MAY BE DOOMED BY... THE RETURN OF THE HUNTER!

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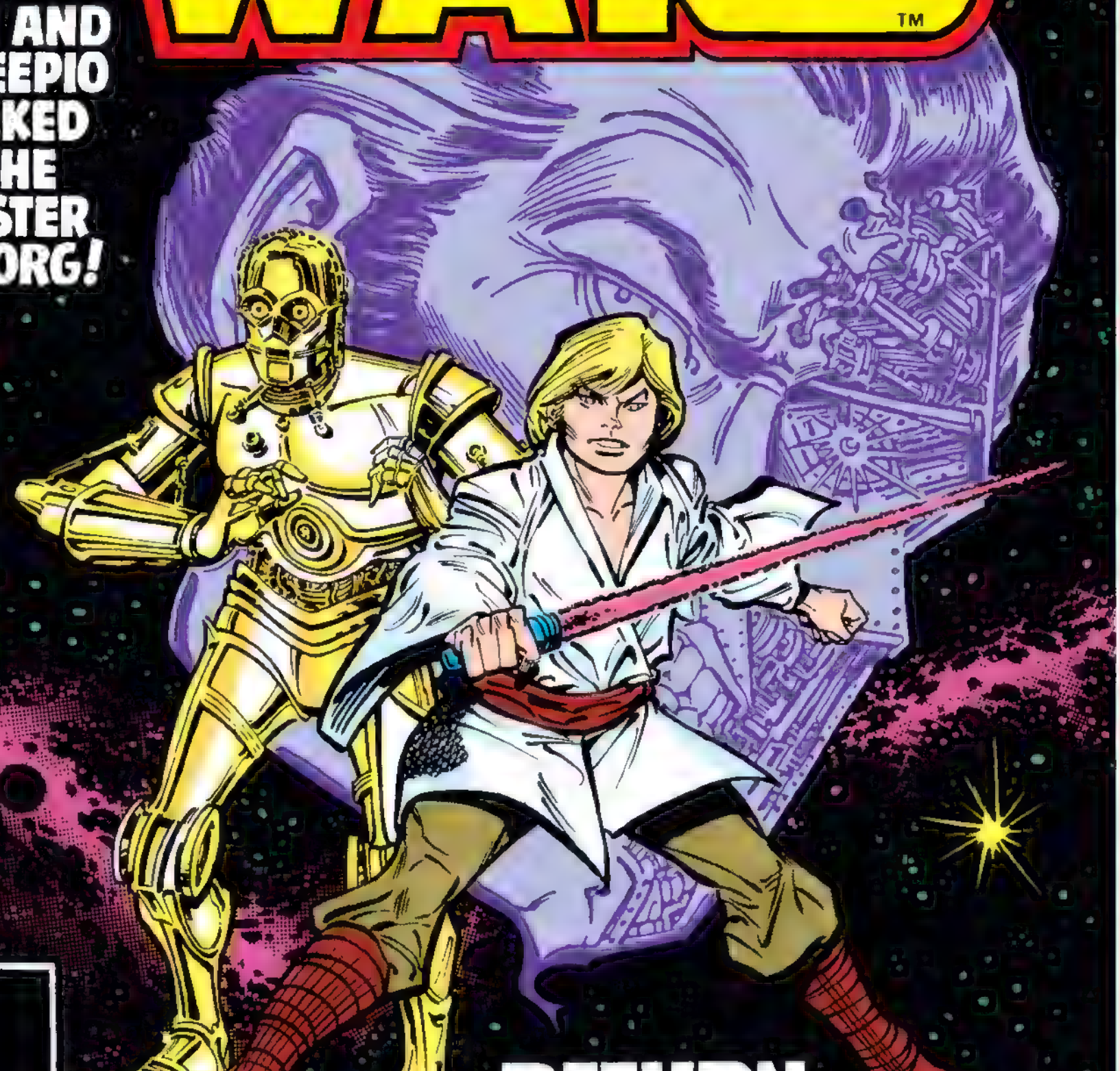

RETURN OF THE HUNTER!

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RETURN OF THE HUNTER

IN MOST OUTWORLD CANTINAS, SUDDEN **DEATH** IS NO GREAT NOVELTY. STILL, EVEN IN **THESE** ENVIRONS, WHEN DEALT WITH ENOUGH SWIFTNESS AND SAVAGERY...

...SHOCK AND **FRIGHT** QUICKLY FOLLOW!

HE'S *MARKO TYNE.* *WANTED* IN NINE SYSTEMS FOR UNLICENSED SLAVING.

I'M *CLAIMING* HIM.

SINCE NO ONE'S TRIED TO SHOOT ME IN THE *BACK*... I TAKE IT HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY *FRIENDS* HERE.

IN WHICH CASE, *TWO* OF YOU WON'T MIND VOLUNTEERING TO CARRY HIS *BODY* FOR ME.

THAT'S *DROID* WORK, BOUNTY HUNTER. SO GO GET A--

YOU TAKE THE *HEAVY* END.

THE MAN *NEXT* TO YOU CAN GRAB THE *FEET.*

FIVE *WEEKS* HE'S BEEN AROUND... AND AT LEAST *ONCE* A WEEK, HE DOES *THIS!*

IT'S BAD FOR *BUSINESS.*

IT WAS *WORSE* FOR MARKO TYNE! THAT BOUNTY HUNTER LOOKS HALF *CRAZY*--

--WHO *IS* HE?

HIS NAME IS **VALANCE**. ONCE HE WAS A SOLDIER OF PROMISE SERVING THE **EMPIRE**. THAT SERVICE WAS **ENDED** BY A REBEL AERIAL TORPEDO.* YET THANKS TO ADVANCED MEDICAL TECHNIQUES, HE **SURVIVES**... AND CURSES THE FACT THAT HE **DOES**. FOR VALANCE HAS BECOME SOMETHING **LESS** THAN HE WAS...

... AND SOMETHING FAR **MORE**!

SKINKER! IT'S **PAYDAY**!

*AS TOLD IN **STAR WARS** #16. --ARCHIE.

COLLECTED ANOTHER **REWARD**, DID YA? YOU'RE RIGHT **GOOD** AT YOUR WORK, VALANCE.

CAN'T RECALL ANY **OTHER** BOUNTY MAN EVEN **SURVIVIN'** THIS LONG ON JUNCTION.

NO SMALL TALK. YOU HAVE **DROIDS** FOR ME?

RIGHT **HERE**. SCAVENGER SHIPS HAD **SLIM PICKIN'S** THIS WEEK. NO **R-2** OR **3PO** MODELS... THIS IS THE **LOT**.

EXCUSE--MY **CONDITION**, SIR-- HOW MAY I **SERVE** YOU--?

VEEDOW! PA-KOOWW!

BY SAYING **GOOD-BYE**... JUNK!

SURE A **WASTE** OF GOOD CIRCUITRY! BUT LONG AS YOU'RE PAYIN' THE GOIN' RATE FOR **REBUILT DROIDS**--

--I GOT NO **COMPLAINTS.** SAVES ME ALL THAT **TIME** TINKERIN' AROUND, TRYIN' TO FIX 'EM UP.

I'M PAYING YOU FOR **MORE** THAN THE MACHINES, SKINKER.

'COURSE YA ARE! AN' I GOT MY **EYE** OUT... YOU'RE AFTER A **REBEL LAD** WHO MOVES AROUND WITH A **3PO** AND **R-2** UNIT IN TOW.

MUST BE **SOME** REWARD ON 'IM!

ENOUGH. BUT EVEN IF THERE **WEREN'T**--

HE TREATS THEM LIKE **FRIENDS,** SKINKER! **JUNK**... MECHANICALS... HELD IN THE SAME REGARD AS **ANY** ORGANIC!

WELL, I WOULDN'T. SHARE MY **SPICE** WITH ONE... OR WANT IT NEXT TO ME AT THE CANTINA.

BUT THEY'RE **USEFUL**... JUST LIKE **TOOLS** OR **BLASTERS.**

LONG AS THEY KEEP THEIR **PLACE**... I CAN'T SEE **HATING** 'EM. NOT LIKE **YOU** DO, VALANCE. THAT'S--

SOMETHING YOU'LL **NEVER** UNDER-STAND, OLD MAN--

NOT IF YOU WANT TO GO ON **LIVING!**

THE MAN CALLED VALANCE HAS A SECRET. A TERRIBLE SECRET FOR ONE WITH HIS BELIEFS.

I'M **CLOSE.** I **FEEL** IT... **HUNTER'S** INSTINCT.

YOU'VE BEEN AN **OBSESSION,** BOY. EVER SINCE I **LEARNED** ABOUT YOUR DEATH STAR ESCAPE FROM THAT ILLEGAL DUPE OF AN **IMPERIAL TRANSMISSION TAPE.**

I DON'T KNOW YOUR **NAME...** BUT YOU MUST BE QUITE A **HERO** TO THE ALLIANCE.

I'VE WASTED A LOT OF TIME ROAMING THE GALAXY IN **SEARCH** OF YOU. STILL... I GAINED SOME IDEA OF REBEL **SUPPLY** METHODS.

AND WITH THIS NEW **IMPERIAL BLOCKADE** PUTTING ON PRESSURE* ...THE ODDS ARE **PERFECT** FOR A HOTSHOT LIKE YOU SHOWING UP **HERE.**

*IT BEGAN IN SW #25.--ARCH.

AND **THAT'S** WHEN I'LL **DESTROY** YOU, DROID-LOVER!

THIS THEN IS THE HUNTER'S **SECRET...** HIS TORMENT AND HIS SHAME.

THE PRICE OF **SURVIVING** THE AERIAL TORPEDO EXPLOSION WAS THAT **HALF** HIS BODY BE REPLACED BY **CYBERNETIC PARTS.** VALANCE, THE MAN WHO **HATES** ROBOTS... IS A **CYBORG.**

DEEP SPACE! A LONE VESSEL PLIES ITS WAY THROUGH THE SELDOM-TRAVELLED STAR SECTOR KNOWN AS THE GORDIAN REACH...

MASTER LUKE, THIS DROPPING IN AND OUT OF **WARP** IS PLAYING **HAVOC** WITH MY INTERIOR DIRECTIONAL COMPENSATORS!

PART OF OUR **MISSION** IS TO PROBE THE **EXTENT** OF THE EMPIRE'S BLOCKADE, THREEPIO.

I FEAR YOU CAN DEFINITELY INCLUDE **THIS** SYSTEM, SIR! BECAUSE ACCORDING TO OUR **SCANNERS--**

--THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE IS *WELL* REPRESENTED HERE!

A BATTLE CRUISER... USING THAT PLANETOID AS COVER!

THAT'S WHY OUR INSTRUMENTS DIDN'T PICK THEM UP *SOONER*--

DOES THIS MEAN WE'RE *DOOMED*, SIR?

NOT IF THIS LITTLE BABY *MANEUVERS* AS WELL AS THE ALLIANCE TECHNOS BACK ON YAVIN *PROMISED* IT WOULD!

MAIN SCOPE SHOWS IT'S COMING *AFTER* US, MASTER LUKE...AND AT *FULL SPEED!*

NO ONE ADMIRES GENERAL DODONNA'S *MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL* MORE THAN *I* DO, SIR--

--BUT I DOUBT EVEN *THEIR* HANDIWORK COULD ENABLE A SIMPLE CRAFT LIKE *THIS* TO OUTRUN AN IMPERIAL *STAR-DESTROYER!*

IT'S SURE NOT THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON,* THREEPIO--

--BUT MAYBE WE CAN STILL USE ONE OF HAN SOLO'S *SMUGGLING TRICKS.*

THREADING THE ASTEROIDS, HE CALLED IT!

DID CAPTAIN SOLO EVER CONSIDER THAT HURTLING AMONG GREAT HUNKS OF FLOATING *SPACE ROCK*--

--MIGHT PUT A SERIOUS *KNOT* IN ONE'S PARTICULAR *THREAD,* SIR?!

I THINK HAN FELT THAT WAS *MORE LIKELY* TO HAPPEN TO SOMETHING MUCH *LARGER* AND LESS *MANEUVERABLE*--

--THAN *HIS* SHIP... OR *OURS!*

THAT SHOULD SLOW 'EM DOWN ENOUGH FOR US TO MAKE THE JUMP INTO HYPER-SPACE!

GET THE NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTER PERKING, THREEPIO--

--WE'RE GOING INTO PHASE TWO OF OUR MISSION!

AND WITH SWIFTNESS AND EFFICIENCY, COORDINATES ARE SOON CALCULATED WHICH WILL BRING THE TRAVELERS TO A WORLD CALLED...

...JUNCTION! THERE ARE MANY PLANETS OF A SIMILAR NATURE SCATTERED ACROSS THE ENDLESS SPECTRUM OF THE OUT-WORLDS.

ESSENTIALLY, THEY ARE TRADING POSTS... GATHERING PLACES AND WATERING HOLES FOR THOSE THAT ROAM BEYOND THE CIVILIZED SYSTEMS.

ANYONE SEEKING SUPPLIES, PARTICU-LARLY THOSE WHO FIND IMPERIAL REGULATION DISTASTEFUL...

...MUST SOONER OR LATER COME TO SUCH A PLANET.

WILL YOU LOOK AT THIS PLACE, THREEPIO? IT'S EVEN BIGGER THAN MOS EISLEY!

AND I BET YOU COULD STICK ALL OF ANCHOR-HEAD INTO THE GROUND FLOOR OF SOME OF THESE BUILDINGS!

THIS'LL BE THE FIRST REAL CITY I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO SEE. THAT TIME WE STOPPED ON CENTARES...* WE WERE TOO BUSY FLEEING DARTH VADER TO PLAY TOURIST!

FRANKLY, MASTER LUKE, IT APPEARS WILD, DIRTY, AND DANGEROUS TO ME--

*STAR WARS #25.--ARCHIE.

--ONLY THE PROSPECT OF GETTING THE **PARTS** WE NEED TO REPAIR **ARTOO DEETOO** * WOULD MAKE ME COME HERE **VOLUNTARILY!**

THOUGH I HOPE YOU NEVER **TELL** THE LITTLE FELLOW THAT, SIR... HE'S QUITE **SELF-CENTERED** AS IT IS!

* FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED IN **ISSUE** 26.--ARCH AGAIN.

YOUR SECRET'S **SAFE,** THREEPIO. AND DON'T **WORRY...** I'M NOT SO IMPRESSED WITH JUNCTION THAT I'LL FORGET TO TAKE CARE OF **BUSINESS!**

AS A MATTER OF **FACT,** THERE'S JUST WHAT WE'RE **LOOKING** FOR... A **SALVAGE YARD!**

SHOULD WE JUST SETTLE FOR THE **FIRST** ONE, MASTER LUKE...OR SHOP AROUND?

SINCE THE BLOCKADE, THE ALLIANCE NEEDS ALL **KINDS** OF SUPPLIES, THREEPIO. I'LL SPREAD OUR TRADE AMONG **DIFFERENT** SPOTS TO AVOID UNDUE **CURIOUSITY--**

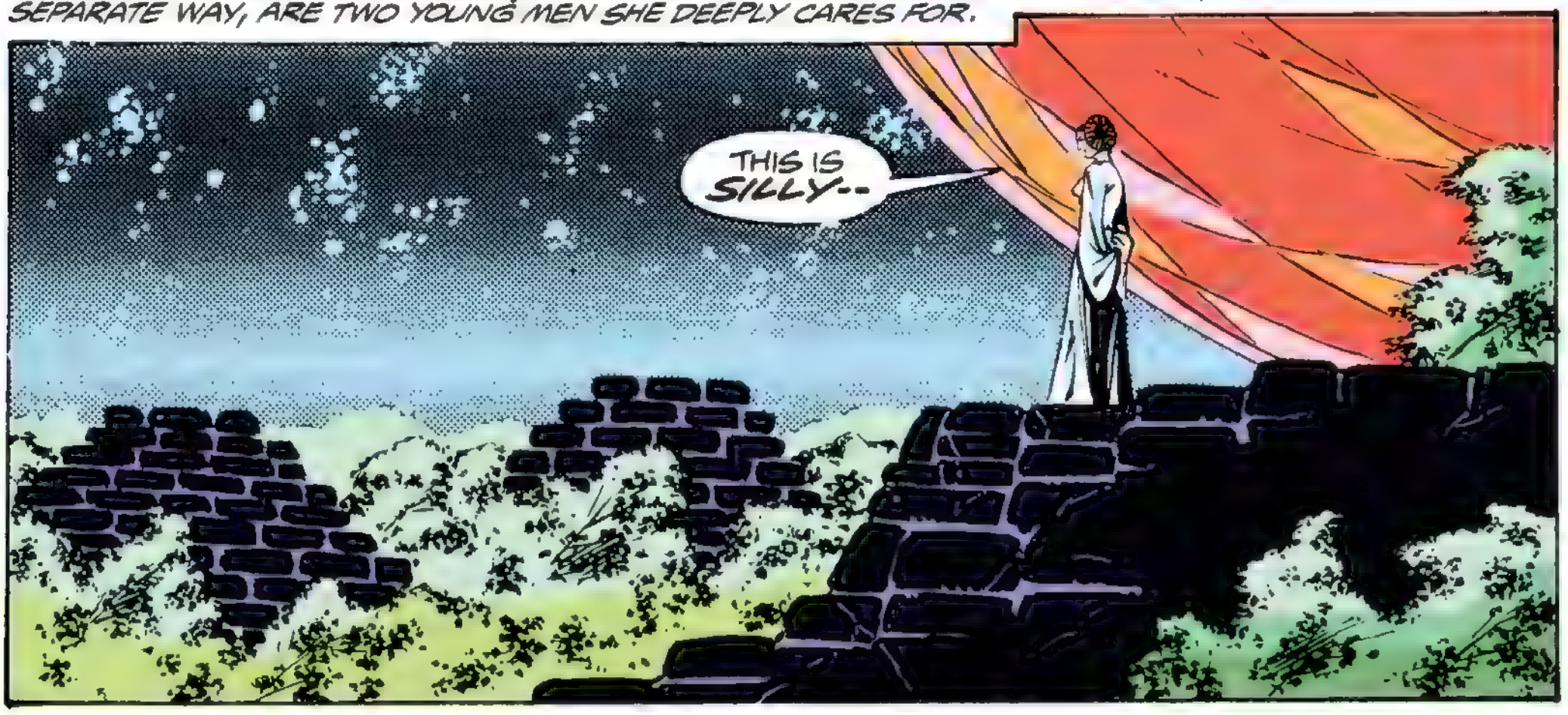
--BUT WE'VE GOT TO START **SOME-WHERE.** WHY **NOT** HERE?

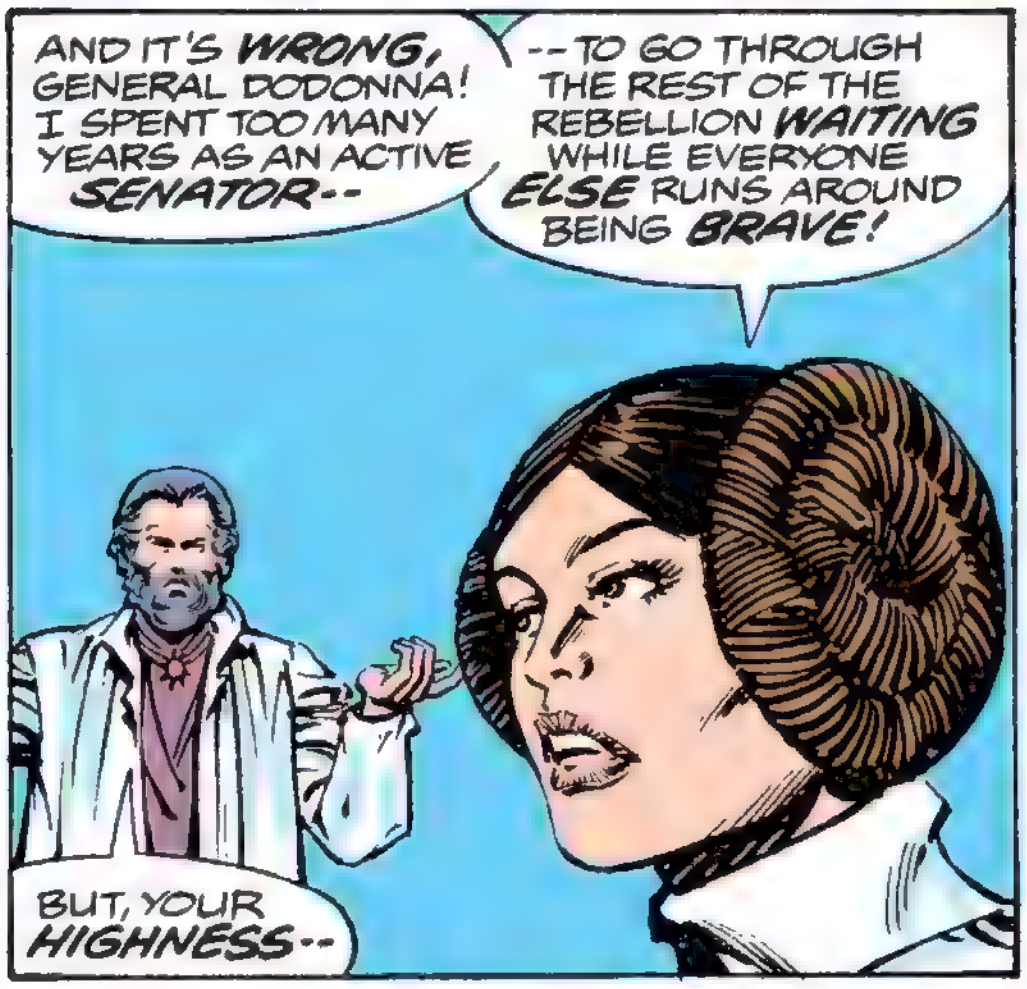
WELL, WELL...!

POLYP! GO GET **VALANCE!** TELL 'IM OL' SKINKER HAS COME ACROSS A LIKELY LOOKIN' **PROSPECT--**

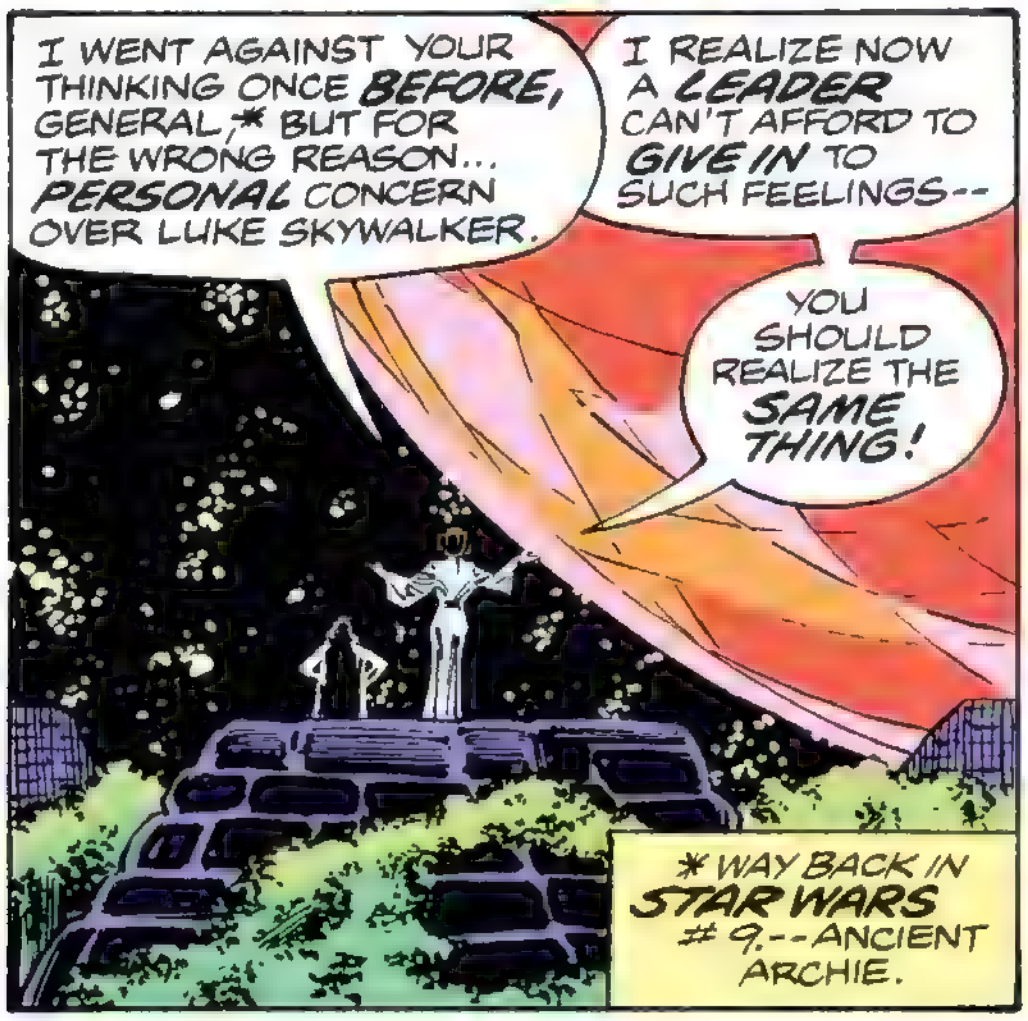
VERY LIKELY!

INTERLUDE: THE FOURTH MOON OF YAVIN. HERE, IT IS NIGHT. AND HERE PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA LOOKS TO THE **STARS,** KNOWING THAT SOMEWHERE AMONG THEM, EACH GOING HIS SEPARATE WAY, ARE TWO YOUNG MEN SHE DEEPLY CARES FOR.




AND IT'S WRONG, GENERAL DODONNA! I SPENT TOO MANY YEARS AS AN ACTIVE SENATOR--
--TO GO THROUGH THE REST OF THE REBELLION WAITING WHILE EVERYONE ELSE RUNS AROUND BEING BRAVE!
BUT, YOUR HIGHNESS--

--WE'VE HAD THIS ARGUMENT BEFORE. YOU'RE MUCH TOO IMPORTANT A SYMBOL OF THE REVOLUTION TO--
THEN I SHOULD BE SEEN... AND IN ACTION! OTHERWISE I'M NO BETTER THAN THE EMPEROR... SKULKING IN HIS PALACE!


I WENT AGAINST YOUR THINKING ONCE BEFORE, GENERAL,* BUT FOR THE WRONG REASON... PERSONAL CONCERN OVER LUKE SKYWALKER.
I REALIZE NOW A LEADER CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE IN TO SUCH FEELINGS--
YOU SHOULD REALIZE THE SAME THING!
*WAY BACK IN STAR WARS #9.--ANCIENT ARCHIE.

YOU'RE TRYING TO PROTECT ME THE WAY I'VE TRIED TO PROTECT LUKE. I APPRECIATE IT, BUT WE BOTH DESERVE BETTER THAN THAT--
--AND SO DOES THE ALLIANCE!
NOW LET'S GO INSIDE... THIS NIGHT AIR MAKES ME TALK TOO MUCH.

AND IF THAT TALK SHOULD DWELL TOO MUCH ON LUKE SKYWALKER AND HIS **MISSION**, OR THE UNKNOWN FATE OF **HAN SOLO**, SOME OF THIS RESOLVE NOT TO GIVE IN TO PERSONAL CONCERN MIGHT **SLIP**...

...SO LEIA ORGANA RETREATS INTO THE MASSASI RUINS. EVEN AS ON **JUNCTION**...

...A DARK **FIGURE** RETREATS DOWN A TWISTING ALLEYWAY.

UNTIL, CERTAIN HE HAS NOT BEEN **FOLLOWED**...

...HE SLIPS INTO A HUMBLE-SEEMING ROOM THAT BOASTS A CONCEALED LONG-RANGE **TRANSMITTER** AMONG ITS FURNISHINGS. BUT...

YOU CAN'T REPORT TO **DARTH VADER**, SPY... NOT ON **THAT** SET. I **FUSED** THE CIRCUITRY WHILE I WAS **WAITING** FOR YOU.

SPOTTED YOU SLIPPING AWAY FROM **SKINKER'S** AS I **APPROACHED** HIS PLACE.

MY FIRST WEEK IN A NEW PORT, I MAKE IT A HABIT TO LEARN **ALL** ABOUT SPIES-- IMPERIAL, REBEL, OR OTHERWISE. KNOWING YOUR **HIDEAWAY**--

--IT WAS NO PROBLEM **BEATING** YOU HERE.

GO DOWN FIGHTING... **SMART.**

AN EASIER DEATH THAN YOUR SITH LORD **MASTER** WOULD PERMIT--

--WHEN HE LEARNED **I'VE** FOUND THE BOY WITH THE DROIDS **AHEAD** OF HIM!

VA-KOW!

AND...

WHAT A **RELIEF,** MASTER LUKE...! FINALLY WE HAVE **ALL** THE COMPONENTS NEEDED TO **MEND** ARTOO DEETOO.

EXCEPT THIS **SKINKER** CHARACTER IS SURE TAKING HIS TIME **PACKING** THEM--

DOUBLE **BLAST** YA, POLYP! WHERE'S **VALANCE?** YA **SAID** YOU DELIVERED THE **MESSAGE!**

THE LAD SEEMS MORE **FARMER** THAN REBEL... BUT EVEN **HE** COULD GET SUSPICIOUS.

STARTING RIGHT **NOW,** SCRAP-RUNNER!

EASY, YOUNG FELLA...! I DON'T THINK YA QUITE **UNDERSTAND** THE SITUATION--

TRY ME. I'M OPEN-MINDED... FOR A **FARMER.**

HE'S IN **MY** PAY, DROID-LOVER! NOW STEP **BACK...** BEFORE KILLING **YOU,** I MEAN TO MELT YOUR PET **JUNK** INTO SLAG!

M-MASTER LUKE! HE'S LOWERED THE GATE AND **LOCKED** IT! WE'RE--

INSIDE, THREEPIO--

--**FAST!**

AS BOY AND DROID TUMBLE INTO THE SALVAGE YARD'S REPAIR SHOP... LUKE HITS THE MAGNETIC **DOOR SEALS!**

IT'LL TAKE THE MADMAN A **FEW** MINUTES TO BURN THROUGH WITH HIS BLASTER--

SHOW US THE **OTHER** WAY OUT, SKINKER!

DON'T SAY THERE **ISN'T**... I KNOW YOUR MESSENGER NEVER CAME PAST **US**.

H-HERE, BOY...! BUT YA CAN'T ESCAPE **VALANCE.** ONCE THAT BOUNTY HUNTER HAS YOUR **SCENT,** HE--

SO FAR THAT'S **ALL** HE'S GOT! THREEPIO, TAKE THOSE COMPONENT PACKS WE NEED AND HEAD FOR THE **SHIP**--

I'LL FOLLOW AFTER **SLOWING** MR. VALANCE DOWN--

KA-BWOM!

I'VE **MORE** THAN **BLASTERS** AT MY COMMAND, REBEL--

--AS YOU AND THE OTHERS HAVE NOW **LEARNED** ...JUST A BIT **TOO LATE!**

AFTER WEEKS OF **WAITING**... I'M SORRY TO HAVE IT **OVER** SO QUICKLY.

STILL... THERE'S THE FAITHFUL ROBOT! SNEAKING AWAY DOWN POLYP'S SCURRY-HOLE... CAN'T HAVE THAT.

GUESS AGAIN, BOUNTY KILLER!

NOW STAY PUT! YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO USES MORE THAN A BLASTER!

A LIGHT SABER...! IN THIS DAY AND AGE...

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

WOOMP

MAYBE THIS WILL MAKE IT EASIER!

SSSSSST

ZDAK!

NO! IT MERELY FORCES ME TO USE... THIS!

YOU TELL *ME*, BOY... WHICH IS *BETTER*?

VALANCE, *WHATEVER* YOU'VE GOT UP YOUR SLEEVE CAN'T EXPEND *THAT* MUCH FORCE--

--WITHOUT RUNNING OUT OF *POWER* SOON.

INTERESTING *THEORY*, DROID-LOVER! BUT ONCE OR TWICE *MORE* IS ALL I NE--

FRAK!

MY *BLAST*--! W-WHAT--?!

*MOVING INSTINCTIVELY, WITHOUT CONSCIOUSLY THINKING--AS BEN KENOBI **TAUGHT**-- LUKE HAS **BLOCKED** THE BLAST. BLOCKED IT, AND FURTHER...*

*...TURNED IT **BACK**!*

*N-NO! **AAAAGH**!*

*IT'S POWER IS GREATLY **DIMINISHED**, AND YET...*

*...NOT WITHOUT **EFFECT**.*

VALANCE...! YOU... YOU'RE... A *BORG*!

IT *SHOCKS* YOU! EVEN THE REBEL WHO CALLS *ROBOTS* HIS FRIENDS--

I KNEW IT... I *KNEW* IT...! THE WHOLE TIME I WAS *SEARCHING* FOR YOU...!

THERE'LL BE NO REWARD FOR YOU, BOY...! NOT FROM THE EMPIRE, NOT SINCE I KILLED DARTH VADER'S IMPERIAL SPY HERE...!

BUT IT'S STILL WORTH IT--

--TO REMOVE A DROID-LOVING HYPOCRITE FROM THE GALAXY!

WROK!

LUKE BARELY HAS TIME TO DRAW BACK... TO MAKE A GLANCING BLOW OF ONE INTENDED TO KILL!

EVEN SO, HE IS SLAMMED VIOLENTLY, PAIN-FULLY INTO THE HARD GROUND OUTSIDE THE RUINED SHOP...

...OUT OF REACH OF HIS LIGHT SABER.

YOU HESITATED, REBEL. YOU COULD HAVE SLICED ME EASILY AS YOU TURNED ASIDE THAT BLAST--

NOW IT'S TOO LATE. I'VE POWER ENOUGH FOR ONE LAST SHOT... YOU'VE GOT NOTHING.

SUDDENLY... ANOTHER FIGURE MOVES FROM THE RUIN WITH SURPRISING SWIFTNESS!

B-BRAVERY ISN'T PART OF MY PROGRAMMING, BUT I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS, SIR! NOT TO MASTER LUKE!

THREEPIO...! I THOUGHT YOU WENT ON TO THE SHIP...!

GET OUT OF HERE... HE'LL BLOW YOU TO PIECES!

THEN HIS ADVANTAGE WILL BE GONE, MASTER LUKE... AND YOU'LL BE RECOVERED ENOUGH TO FIGHT.

THIS TIME YOU WON'T HAVE TO HAVE YOUR COM-PASSION MISTAKEN FOR WEAKNESS BY HESITATING...!

THREEPIO, DO I HAVE TO GIVE YOU A DIRECT COMMAND...? GET--

MADNESS! DROIDS AND HUMANS DON'T BEHAVE LIKE THIS...!

THEY DON'T SACRIFICE THEMSELVES FOR ONE ANOTHER!

PERHAPS NOT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, SIR. CERTAINLY IT'S NOT WIDELY ACCEPTED. BUT PERHAPS IF IT WERE--

--EVEN BEING A CYBORG MIGHT BE EASIER TO BEAR.

ENOUGH, ROBOT. TAKE YOUNG MASTER... MASTER...

SKYWALKER, SIR.

TAKE YOUNG MASTER SKYWALKER... PICK UP HIS LIGHT SABER...

--AND GET THE TWO OF YOU FAR, FAR FROM MY SIGHT!

ZAKOW!

HE SOUNDS LIKE A MAN WHO MIGHT CHANGE HIS MIND AT ANY MOMENT, MASTER LUKE!

HE SOUNDS LIKE A MAN WHO HASN'T MADE IT UP YET, THREEPIO. AND, BEFORE HE DOES--

--WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY BACK TO YAVIN WITH SUPPLIES FOR THE ALLIANCE AND THE PARTS TO SAVE ARTOO-DEETOO.

STILL, WHATEVER HIS DECISION... I DON'T THINK WE'VE HEARD THE LAST OF MISTER VALANCE!

NEXT ISSUE: A FEW ANSWERS CONCERNING HAN SOLO, HIS PARTNER, CHEWBACCA, AND...

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO JABBA THE HUT!

STAR WARS®

OMNIBUS

A LONG TIME AGO. . . .

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. . . .

With those words the world was plunged into an epic adventure that continues to this day on television, in novels, in video games, and in comic books.

From July 1977 to September 1986, Marvel Comics Group published monthly comics based on the wildly successful *Star Wars* film franchise.

When looking back at these early tales with the advantage of hindsight, the "mistakes" (such as the idea that Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker's father were two different people) are obvious, but at the time, the *Star Wars* galaxy was a great unknown. While there has been much discussion over the years as to how, where, or even *if* these stories fit into the official *Star Wars* continuity, there is no denying their charm and their power to entertain.

Collected here are the first twenty-seven issues of the Marvel Comics *Star Wars* series that launched in 1977—the same year as the first film—beginning with the comics adaptation of *A New Hope*.